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KHYBER CARAVAN

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CANNIBAL QUEST

FOOT-LOOSE IN INDIA

LOOSE AMONG DEVILS

KHYBER CARAVAN

Through
Kashmir, Waziristan, Afghanistan, Baluchistan
and Northern India

by
GORDON SINCLAIR, F.R.G.S.

Illustrated with
Photographs and Maps

Publishers
since 1812

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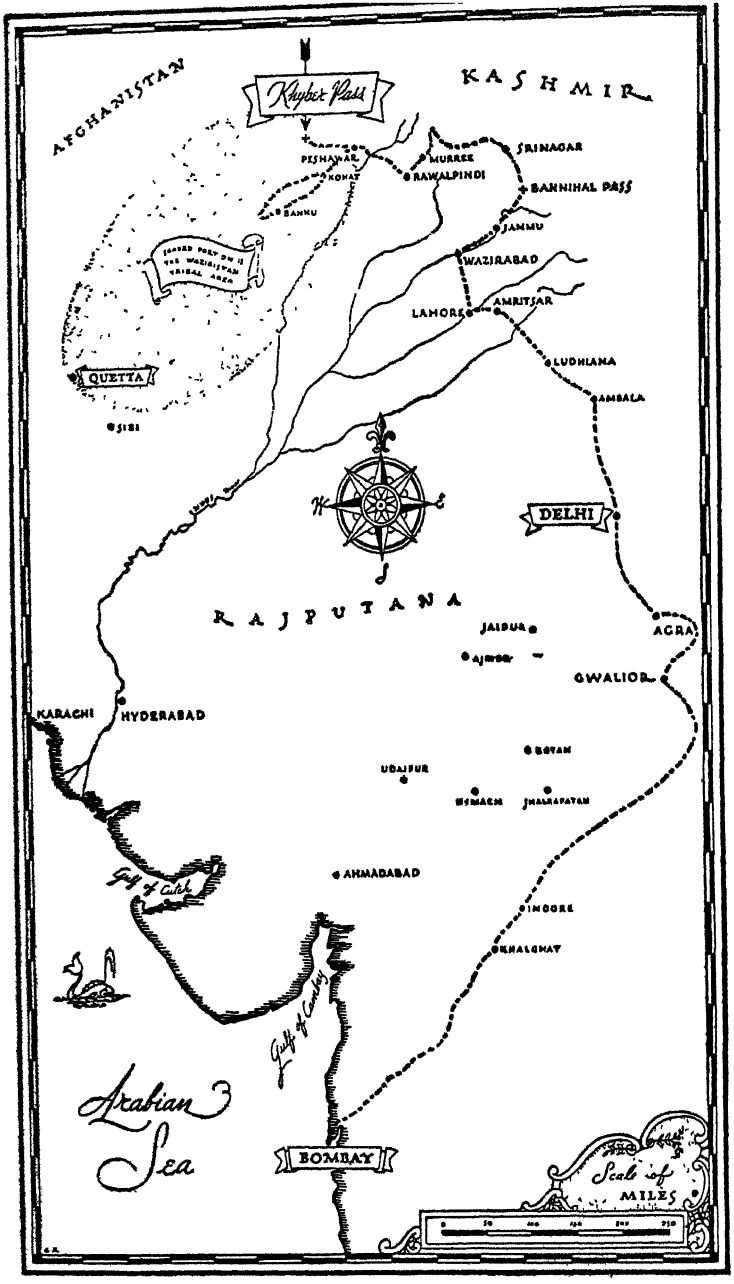
For seven years they have sent me across the world's far acres in search of that most perishable commodity . . . news. The Toronto Star *paid all the costs but sought neither profit, credit nor the right to read the manuscript.*

GORDON SINCLAIR

Islington, Ontario
March, 1936

KHYBER CARAVAN


AFGHANISTAN
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SRINAGAR
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JAMMU
WAZIRABAD
LAHORE
AMRITSAR
LUDHIANA
AMBALA
DELHI
AGRA
QUETTA
SIBI
RAJPUTANA
JAIPUR
Ajmer
GWALIOR
KARACHI
HYDERABAD
UDAIPUR
BOPAL
INDORE
BHALGHAT
AHMADABAD
Gulf of Cutch
Gulf of Cambay
Arabian Sea
BOMBAY
Scale of MILES

KHYBER CARAVAN

Chapter I

ROOFTOP OF THE WORLD

POISED like a ghostly goddess two miles above the fertile Vale of Kashmir is the Bannihal Pass, highest motor road on earth, midsummer dividing line between the suffocating heat of India's plains and the fragrant winds of Himalayan forests.

Point your car up the steep and twisted paths to the snow-clogged tunnels atop the Bannihal and you aim straight at adventure.

Immediately beyond that rooftop of the world lies the fruitful valleys of His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hindu ruler of a Moslem state, only land in the world where it's a crime to eat or own beef in any form, where you go to gaol for six months if you witness a drowning, where no man, woman or child, except the raja himself, owns so much as a square foot of land or lake, and where young bloods from Calcutta desks or Peshawar parade-grounds travel in quest of romantic amour.

North-east lies Tibet, land of the crimson abbots, where highway robbery is a licensed occupation. North-west lies Afghanistan, rugged homeland of Khyber raiders who for three thousand years have plundered the plains of India. Through the outer passes come tinkling caravans from distant Turkestan and down speeding rivers splash unwieldy grain barges heavy with the harvests of middle Asia.

Plotting invasion of this cool green land, three men and an overloaded Chevrolet waited in impatience at Lahore, metropolis of India's Punjab and handiest hop-off town for Bannihal. They were impatient for word that avalanches in the mountains had been cleared and the roads sufficiently free of ice and snow for driving.

This was the last week of April, 1935. The plains were alreay browned by a heat wave that would reach its pinnacle in late June before the break of the monsoon.

Narayan, my bearer, Baboo, an amiable driver-mechanic-interpreter, and myself, a footloose reporter on a vagabond assignment for the Toronto *Star*, were the threesome. Our aims were casual and unscientific to the point of inefficiency. We planned to escape the heat which had already driven us to bad tempers on the dusty and surprisingly dull journey from Bombay, and to spy out those homelands of tribal insurgency inaccessible by railway.

We were not attempting conquests or explorations, planned no research, advanced no cause, preached no gospel. We just wanted to see what these mid-Asians looked like and talked about and we figured that Kashmir, while focal point for many a cream-puff tourist, was still a good base to start from because it was interesting, healthy, friendly, and at the front door of every lair of mid-Indian mystery from Nepal to Nanga Parbhat.

Since Baboo and Narayan frequently invade the pages of this vagabond record this seems an acceptable place to move over and give them the spotlight.

Baboo was a cheerful, willing but unkempt cavalier of the road, full of pranks and hero-worship. Recommended to me as a competent mechanic in Bombay I'd signed him on and watched with some misgivings while he calmly took charge, first of the car, then of me and later of everything in sight. If bullock drivers and tonga

wallahs didn't get out of the way at the first arrogant toot of his horn he cursed them with determined facility back through two or three generations. Toll-gate men came in for his scorn and contempt. All police were idiots and service station attendants of inferior clay. One day *en route* to Lahore he spotted a young camel on the road. It started to run ahead of the car. Baboo kept right on its tail thumbing his horn furiously. I laughed at the uncouth speed of the gangling beast. This was swell; the sahib was a man with a sense of humour.

We went faster and faster. The camel got up to 30 miles an hour but wouldn't swerve into the ditch. Suddenly with all four feet kicking up the dust this camel put the brakes on and decided he'd had enough of this tomfoolery. He backed up toward the car and started kicking the paint right off the thing.

Bang! went a light. Crash! went the other light. The camel stood there lashing out one foot at a time. Baboo got all balled up and didn't know enough to back the car up. He rushed out to plead with the camel, whereupon the loose-limbed brute smacked him one under the chin and hoisted him on the hood, which was so hot he almost sizzled.

Money, to him, didn't mean much. He told me of his wife, five daughters and a tendency to go on the loose when he got into strange towns where there were Kashmir courtesans sitting invitingly in iron cages. Would I please give him twenty cents a day for food and send the rest each month, to his wife, so he wouldn't waste it on the girls?

I said sure, but after a week of this he wanted to know if I could please let him have four dollars and in a month he was deep in debt.

The more elementary accomplishments of the white man left Baboo at all times gasping with admiration. We came once to a clean and cool river. I asked if there

were crocodiles around and was assured there were none —which was a lie—and dived in. The ability to swim that river, about 150 feet wide, left Baboo talking to himself for days.

Shooting delighted him, too, and until he went out with me he'd never seen a rifle fired. One day we were chasing through a bit of scrubby jungle when a herd of deer came bounding toward us, saw us, sniffed, wheeled and galloped away again. I took a snap shot at the rear buck and he went down, thereupon Baboo went dancing around like a dervish. Daily thereafter he'd stop strangers on the road to tell them about it.

The farther north we got, however, the more quiet he became. He had no longer shouted oaths at cart drivers who cluttered the roads, because these cart drivers were stout, bearded fellows who could take him by the throat and throttle him. Out in the jungle, where I was running around in khaki shorts, Baboo's dignity clothed him in a white chauffeur's get-out complete with cap sporting the initials G.S. in honour of me.

Although Hindu, Baboo had no caste. He ate meat, wore cowhide shoes and tooted his horn just as arrogantly at Brahman priests as at untouchables. He listened with cynical amazement to some of the more naïve legends uncorked by pious pundits in the temples, particularly when we came to large ashrams, or chummeries, back of the pagodas where widows took refuge from the awful sin of being widows.

Many of these widows, forbidden for ever to remarry, were good-lookers in a graceful catlike way and Baboo never left a temple without some crack about how nice it would be to be a priest there. On the other hand, he had the Hindu's horror of causing death. He encouraged me to use the rifle on any moving target so long as I did the shooting and he ate the meat, but one day, threading our way through a gorge, we came across a colt that had

fallen from the top and lay crumpled there dying, not only from broken bones, but from thirst.

I told Baboo to get out and shoot the poor beast. He shrank from this command in terror, but did take the last of his own water to give the animal a drink. Narayan, the bearer, also refused to kill the colt although he helped me examine it. We found three legs broken so I shot the little fellow and everyone seemed content.

Monkeys fascinated Baboo and he never quite recovered from his early desire to stop and feed every one he came to. If he had got away with that, we'd have been on the road for about two hundred years.

Narayan, the bearer, was a haughty fellow somewhat shy on masculinity. His voice was falsetto, his manners kittenish and his dignity colossal.

I had used him on two previous jaunts through India and on this trip sent him no advice that I was coming but when the *Conte Verde* pulled in at Victoria dock, Bombay, there he stood spotless in white to take charge of customs clearance. He greeted me as though I'd just been away on a brief week-end trip.

Narayan had a religion that changed from Hindu to Buddhist to Christian to Moslem depending on where he was, one wife, no children and a fixed determination to tell the world what a swell guy I was.

At times, as in the small states of Rajputana and Kathawan, this was awkward. These places, in theory at least, have their own currency, stamps, customs duties and laws. They are not—again in theory—answerable to Britain or to British laws, only to their own begum, maharaja, pooh-bah, or what is it? To be sure, their stamps will carry a letter only within their own boundaries and their money is scorned by all except their own poorly-fed soldiers. They do, however, levy duty and toll on casual prowlers through their domains unless these prowlers happen to have a man like Narayan along.

In such case the car draws up at a chain barrier stretched across a road. Under a banyan tree in the ditch doze four or five soldiers, their rusty rifles pillowed under their heads. "Wake up, you swine! Salute, you sons of dogs! The resident is here," Narayan barks.

The soldiers blink tired eyes but don't move. From a rear shack there shuffles a civilian with a ring of huge keys which he shakes to make noises. "Haste, you fool of a fool; don't keep the resident waiting!"

Now, as an ambling author, I have to pay toll to pass this gate and I might have to pay duty, depending on whether I tip this guy a nickel or a dime; but as "His Excellency the resident of Kolapur," who Narayan has decided I am, I get a free ride and a present arms.

There are bungalows spread through the Rajput country, some rather hideous ones for non-officials like me; some for army officers, some for forestry patrols and some for government engineers. Narayan never lets me down. If it's an engineer's bungalow we need, I am surveying the electrical possibilities of the area. If a military bungalow, I'm with the intelligence; a sort of super-spy reading men's minds along the way and uncovering anti-British feeling. If it's a forest bungalow, generally in the thickest big game country, Narayan demands the instant and immediate attendance of the chief stalker to know just what game is near by and where.

Having been shown into the bungalow, he claps lordly hands and demands a hot bath for the resident (or the general or whatever I am that day). He gets coolies to unload the luggage. This is his job but he never does it. He sends someone scurrying a mile or so to get me fresh oranges and ice. If he can't find these he gets coconuts so I can drink the milk.

If we get into a town where there's a hotel, he goes ahead to spy out the land before ushering me in. In

Jaipur, for instance, there were four hotels. Narayan had never been there, so he chartered a horse and went snooping. Soon he came back to usher me toward the New Hotel. The advertisements for the Rajputana looked good so I held out for the Raj. "No good," he cooed in his gentle way. "Indian people stay there." An Indian, to him, is like something you find in a bacteriologist's jars.

He is shocked into pained silence if my ideas on tipping don't quite mesh with his. Narayan's technique is to get all the luggage on the car, to pay the official bills and then to line up the tip hounds who have been all this time staring at me with covetous, wolfish eyes. If I'm fed up or tired or in a hurry, I let him tip them whatever he wants to, knowing perfectly well that he'll charge me double. Naturally this is his idea of paradise and behaviour worthy of a great sahib.

But sometimes I do the tipping and in such case I don't always agree with the haughty Narayan. He, for instance, figures that the man who has handed me an orange is worth a nickel, while the kid who ran two miles to get it merits two cents. I outrage both Narayan and the caste idea by reversing this.

He is horrified, too, if I buy anything for myself without consulting him first because he can—or thinks he can—make a 10 per cent rake-off on everything. His technique on this is pretty smooth, worthy of a purchasing agent. He just brings along the catalogue of Bombay's most expensive shops, buys stuff in the bazaars at a third off and charges me the Bombay price. Occasionally I object very mildly; then he whips out the catalogue.

One day I met this by driving him to the bazaar and buying the identical goods four to ten cents a tin cheaper than he said he had paid. He surveyed me in embarrassed silence for a minute and then shyly handed

me some change. He probably gyps me ten dollars a month which won't cause me to get any balder; but saves me frets and worries which puts us all square. He is worth all he gets, because he is thorough, willing, and very, very clean.

A dust storm which howled in on Lahore from the West decided us to break away from the midlands even before the upper roads were open so we pointed the car along Kim's path toward distant snows realizing on that stifling dawn that we'd be crawling into overcoats by evening.

We rolled down Lahore's club-lined wall and out the grand trunk road to Waziribad where the Himalayas came into view far on our right, then swung through a vast mob of prowling criminals toward the railroad's end at Jammu. These wandering thieves, to whom crime is a deep religion, were following the wheat harvest north cleaning a field with hand scythes for what gleanings they could get afterward and what stock they could pinch.

Like other gipsy bands we met, they led muzzled bears about with them; the womenfolk cut and shocked the grain, while men threshed it with sticks all the while shrieking and bellowing like disciplined baboons. Swung in potato sacks between poplar trees at the roadside were the babies with wet nurses to soothe them with food and old men of the tribe to rock them to sleep. Par for each nurse was seven babes and there were no audible complaints of a milk famine.

Beyond Jammu wheat fields were green and fresh, frogs croaked cheerily, there were pines instead of palm trees, rivers fed from distant snows rushed noisily toward the plains instead of creeping along in indolent stagnation.

A red gate was swung across the road in our path and two soldiers came and took me from the car to the maharajah's custom-house where I was made very conscious of the fact that beyond that gate was an

independent land, Indian on the map, but not Indian in law. Indian in cash but not Indian in custom.

I had to fill out nine sets of papers about myself and family, another batch for Baboo and Narayan and a third for the Chevrolet. Then the gimme boys measured my petrol, soaked me 18 cents a gallon duty in spite of the fact I'd already paid 23 cents a gallon tax, charged me on my rifle, some food I had along in case of mountain seige and on a lone tin of cigarettes. A woman in a bus behind me had to pay one cent duty on a cucumber, and did she put up a howl! These formalities ended, we were waved through but soon came to more toll barriers one after another. Keepers here asked if we were going to Srinagar, the Kashmir capital, and when we said we were they abandoned the toll charge. That was just a come-on gag which I learned about later.

For 50 miles then we climbed and sank; zoomed upward again, then swung into hairpin curves and dived toward the valleys. We'd be up a mile, then down in a valley and before long up on a peak again; it was a roller-coaster ride. Frequently we were held up while coolie gangs cleared the path of fallen rock and once a tree came smashing down two car lengths ahead of the machine. It was followed by a torrent of water, and and when the coolies came up and pushed it aside we started on only to be buried in a slide of loose slate-like rock. For one harrowing minute it looked as if the whole road would go out pushing us to death down the valley, but we cuddled close to the mountainside and got by that spot.

Soon afterward we came to a beautiful rest-house beside a brook. The garden was aflame with bloom and the building a freshly painted white. The patriarchal keeper, wearing a purple pea-scooper hat, clasped his hands and came to me in apparent agony. "Hazoor,"

he whined. "I regret it, hazoor, but I have only fish for your honour to eat."

That was a break because I hadn't expected anything whatever. I told him to get the fish and soon he went sliding down toward the brook. I asked Narayan about this. Was the old man just going to catch the fish? He said yes, so I went down too and we landed as nice a mess of speckled trout as any expert ever laid eyes on. And this old man was sorry! The fish was so tasty and the general atmosphere of this nook so clean and romantic that I was tempted to stay the night even though it was now only lunchtime. Unluckily I pushed on, only to have the road go out ahead of us and leave us out on a ledge with no hope of turning back.

The mountain to the right of the ledgelike road had been apparently solid rock. It was so white that Baboo, who had never seen snow in his life, insisted that the white gleam toward which we were heading was this same kind of rock and not snow at all. We were mildly arguing this point when the whole hillside collapsed as if blasted and slid to the valley in a cloud of dust. Had we been on the particular shelf it would have taken days to dig us out.

As it was, we sat there wondering just when our own shelf would break up. There was nothing to do. We could go neither forward nor back. We could barely get out of the car to walk. So we sat and were gradually surrounded by reassuring but somewhat vague hill people who gave us a sign language pledge that they would get us through. These men came up in twos and threes, followed by their womenfolk who carried the picks and shovels. The women were beautiful in a grime-covered sort of way and wore ropes of silver about their waists. Their black hair, woven into dozens of finely formed pigtails, spilled down their backs in greasy coils.

They all looked at us, looked at the rock on which

we were stalled, looked at the mountainside where there had once been a road, and then contentedly sat down. My boys could not speak Kashmiri, so we just sat there too wondering how cold the night would be. Soon a boss arrived—a very energetic boss. He started his crowd gouging out a new road in jig time and I got a laugh out of the shovel crew who worked two men to a spade. You mightn't think that possible but it was done, with a rope. One had the handle, the other a rope on the handle, and they swung in unison with amazing results. A road began to take shape as though by magic.

The height of the peaks around us brought darkness early and by four the last shafts of sunlight disappeared in a golden glow. At once it was night, invigorating and clear. There had been signs all up the hillside warning us that night travel was forbidden and now the coolie boss came up to repeat this, saying we could go back with him to a stone shack where we'd be warm. He said his men would work all night getting a road in shape but it would be risky staying in the car because another slide might engulf us.

We drained the radiator, unloaded our kit and gave it to the women; they tied rope shoes to their stubby feet and started down the mountainside while we backtracked four miles to the stone huts poised over the valley. On the last turn, before daylight completely vanished, I looked back and saw the car standing there, a forlorn and shadowy symbol of a distant world. Somehow I never expected to see it again. That shelf was so narrow, the road so shaky and the valley so far below.

Throughout the cold Kashmir night the wind sang of mighty conquests, and jackals in the valleys yelped of petty ones. We were snug but crowded in our snow-banked igloo and I slept like a child. Four of us had turned in but when we woke there were six, two wrinkled

abbots in grey sheepskins having come out of the night to share our warmth.

I got up first, because I was anxious about the car. The cold was biting even though I walked through the grey of dawn swathed in skins lent me by the abbots. Icicles hung from the drip pipe of the radiator, but the car was okay, although it took us a long time to melt enough snow for the radiator. The gang were still trying to fix the road and had accomplished wonders. I felt sure we could carry on because the coolies had stretched three rows of heavy rope along the chasm so that if the machine started to slide they could hold it there, until we got out at least.

The bad part was about 80 feet across with a 2,000-foot drop. I figured that if I walked over I might lose my nerve, so I climbed into the machine. She hummed into life without protest. I took the wheel, hugged the bank as close as I could and started across while the men held the rope tight against the car's left side. One chunk of road, about a yard wide, went out behind us leaving a muddy gash, but I went across all right and pulled up on a more solid shelf to wait for the boys with the kit.

A little girl dressed in what once had been a horse blanket brought me three fish for a nickel and we cooked these for breakfast before pushing on down the valley. We cork-screwed 2,000 feet down into rice country fragrant with lilac and lily of the valley, and then hit a comparatively level road for the run into Bannihal, the town we'd expected to make the night before.

A barrier was across the road there and a sign said the route above was snowbound for seven miles. A gaunt Khassadar full of friendly gestures said we'd have to wait about twenty hours but there was a rest-house with good food and the fishing was excellent. We went to the bungalow, but it was full; whereupon the keeper started

chasing some of his Indian guests out. I gave that the tut-tut, being a polite bloke who doesn't like to disturb the comforts of others, but was assured their comfort was nothing; a mere nothing.

"These are all interloping Indians," explained the Indian khansamah in his grandest manner. "We have three rest-houses here; one for Europeans like yourself, one for Hindus and one for Mohammedans. These guests may now go to their proper place." He waved them airily aside.

"Then it is quite usual to be delayed here?"

"Quite. Sometimes for weeks. We even have here a hospital for travellers who come down frozen. You see, you must now climb 9,000 feet into the clouds where blizzards and avalanches are bad."

Most of the twenty hours passed in sleep soothed by the lullaby of love-making frogs and the tinkle of cow-bells. When the soldier told us we'd be another twenty-four hours before the snow was cleared away, I took up the study of frog love from a standpoint of science but the young frogs were very determined about their amours and resented my examinations, so I switched my scientific research to bloodsuckers.

This came about accidentally. The friendly gendarme came up to slip us the word that another twelve-hour delay was our fate and that the road behind had given out too—we were now out on a raft for sure. By this time the babble of the brook and the croon of the frogs had overwhelmed me with realization that speed was of no value anyhow and Bannihal was a swell town. The air held a smell of spring and fresh earth and nesting birds. I decided to sit down and let things work themselves out.

"You came armed?" the cop asked.

"Yes."

"Did you get a Kashmir licence?"

"Yes."

"Well, up above, just at the fringe of snow, there are snow leopards. You might get one. They are valuable but not too dangerous."

I started up to the leopard belt that afternoon with the sun on my back. The altitude and the exertion of the climb made me tired so I sat down beside a rice field and discovered, with some surprise, that both feet were bleeding. I thought I must be a softy. I went to a stream and took off a shoe to bathe the foot. Clinging there were three black leeches grown fat on my blood. I whipped them off and removed the other shoe. Two leeches hung there, and as I sat three others came inching their way on to my leg. There was no feeling when they started to absorb the blood but it was surprising how much they took. There was something frightening beyond their actual size in these clammy vampires and I involuntarily shuddered. I think I would far sooner have faced the leopards.

By now it had grown too late to go up in the high snows alone, and I started down again and collected several more leeches. One of these I didn't see until I got back and he had grown so fat he was almost round.

I also got lost in this descent by trying to miss the rice beds and follow the river. This was a good idea while I was high but the lower I got the faster the river and the steeper the banks. I found myself on a rock-strewn island in midstream sharing the sunny side of the boulders with scampering long-tailed lizards. They being amiable but highly excitable lizards, I shifted my nature study to them for a bit and made some amusing if not important discoveries about the domestic affairs of the last remaining dinosaurs. Like the frogs and the leeches and the birds, the lizards were in love for this was spring in Kashmir. A lizard in love is quite a skittish show-off; invariably smaller than his sweetheart, he struts around

in her presence like a drum major but when the lady of his heart comes to the point of acquiescence he gets all balled up and nervous like many a man.

To get off the lizard island, I had to go away up the mountain again and down by way of the rice beds; coming down I met an old man on an ox, who insisted on stopping at a neighbouring farm and getting me an ox too. This was the first time I ever travelled by ox and I hope it will be the last.

The soldier was waiting for me again and this time assured me that I could proceed to the capital on the morrow provided it neither rained nor snowed. I went to bed feeling a little envious of the frogs and the lizards and the leeches, all of whom had someone to make love to. Spring and the mountain air, you see, were getting me too.

Then I dreamed of winning a medal by conquering Mount Everest and awoke with the first shaft of sunlight to be told that the day was at hand; we were to assault the Bannihal Pass; so I went into a sort of daydream and said to myself, "If we make it we'll be in the first five among cars to get through this year."

That's a rather feeble honour, but better than none; so I got up, drank a bowl of strong Kashmir tea and we pushed off. Fifty yards from the rest-house we were stopped again. The army was out with lancers and trucks and underfed infantrymen, and they said it had all been a mistake; I could not go on until afternoon when the sun would be at its height. That was eight hours away.

"But why?"

"Deep snow," the Kashmir army replied laconically. I sat down and read of dogs for sale and typists wanted and watched the coolies, who were past-masters of philosophy, cook their eternal rice in blackened pots and wait and wait and wait.

A man tottered down the road carrying a calf. Its

mother gave birth in the hills but the calf couldn't walk, so the man drove the cow ahead of him and carried the calf 10 down-hill miles. In a small patch of ground above the road 30 men sat around a corpse. They had been sitting that way for two days, but soon the moon was due to be at the full and they would bury it. These were Mohammedans from the hills and there were no women at this wake because women never attend either wakes or funerals in Moslem lands.

I fell asleep, my head pillowed on a camera box. The edge was sharp and it cut off the blood flow to my skull which made me dream awful dreams. When I woke and got up I fell in a heap as the blood rushed back from my head and the boys thought I'd been doing a spot of secret drinking, which is looked on as a very nasty vice in India.

At last eight hours passed and the everlasting cop with his everlasting grin came up and said, in effect, "Okay, boss, away you go."

We proceeded perhaps fifty feet and were stopped by the army, backed up by six clerks who looked the car over and commanded: "There is a twenty rupee toll to pay." I expected this and had the coins in my hand.

I don't speak much Hindustani but at this time I noticed my own servants grow apprehensive; they were telling each other that the sahib was going to get very mad about something. A man dressed in yellow came over and explained, "You will have to pay the possession tax."

"Possession tax? What's a possession tax?"

"On the car. You possess a car. You take the car to Kashmir; the possession tax is thirty dollars."

"But I've been in Kashmir for days. I paid duty on my petrol and oil, on my rifle, my food, my cigarettes when I came in at Jammu."

"That was duty. This is a tax. A possession tax."

"Well, I don't know what a possession tax is, but it's unfair. You spend fortunes inviting tourists to Kashmir, then set bandits and brigands and thieves at passes in the hills and rob us. You plunder and loot us. You . . ." I had forgotten all the philosophy those amorous frogs had taught me. That's the trouble of being a son of the Clan of Sinclair in time of financial encroachment.

The six clerks gathered nearer and laughed derisively. They had me licked and they knew they had me licked and afterwards when I'd calmed down a bit, I didn't blame them for a little exulting. God knows the Indian in his own homeland puts up with enough injustice and insult at the hands and tongues of us who have white hides.

But just then I was sore; behind were hazardous roads studded with toll gates. All of these, bar one, had passed me free on assurance that I was bound for Srinagar. Now, if I turned back, each of these tollmen would levy a double tax and either outwardly or secretly call me liar. If I didn't turn back, I paid the possession tax and liked it. That's what I did (without liking it), then realized that life was too interesting for even a Scot to worry about a gyp. We had rumbled through an ice tunnel and the road beyond had become pretty much of a nightmare, albeit a rather pleasant nightmare.

Clouds of snow rose like dust as rocks plunged down from icy pinnacles. We ran under small waterfalls which thundered on the car roof, caught up with ruddy Tibetans carrying vast loads down the glaciers, and passed monks and abbots crawling upwards as they'd been doing for week after week to reach some distant monastery, there to lock themselves in heatless cells for years on end . . . or for ever.

We met a Pathan strayed miles off his normal range in the Khyber, panic-stricken with fear at his height. He was lying on a ledge about 30 feet below the main road

too frightened to move hand or foot. All he did was bleat like a sheep while my boys stood above him gloating.

"Help that man up!" I suggested.

"How, sahib?" the servants demanded as they puffed cigarettes and grinned cheerfully at the terror of this stern-eyed hillman who was normally an arrogant enemy.

"Unfasten the luggage and pull him up with the straps and ropes. We can't leave the man there; he'll fall off or freeze."

Such interference on my part caused the boys to go into a surly attack of passive resistance but we got the Pathan up after awhile. So far as his strength permitted, he was full of salaams and kowtows and gratitude.

After exciting twists and climbs we reached the tunnel; the highest piece of motor road in the world. Snows here were melting so fast that the road became a river, but when we got through to the shady side it was blowing a blizzard of powdery snow and the pike was skiddy. Here, however, it was impossible to fall into the valleys because we were in tunnels nearly all the downward way. From time to time we lurched in a sickening way, but while death lay in wait on the sunny side there were only snowbanks to bump against on the shady side. Frequent rumblings vibrated in the upper hills. This was snow tumbling from the loftiest peak in mad flight. Only once did such an avalanche wipe out the road and when it did we were within a mile of a mountain inn.

We retreated to that haven, were served quail and a sickening sort of tea made with lumps of sour cream in a churn, and waited three hours while the road was dug clear again. That meant we could not make Srinagar that day—our fifth since Lahore, less than 200 miles away—but we did, before sundown, catch a view of that most beautiful of all valleys in all worlds, the Vale of Kashmir. It was worth all the avalanches, landslides and falling

rocks which had imperilled us. It was worth a forty-cent-a-gallon petrol tax and the cursed possession tax. It was almost worth a man's right arm to sit on a spring afternoon and spy out the Vale of Kashmir.

I'm not much of a man for poetry but the writer who described that cool, green valley as "an emerald set in pearls" knew his emeralds. Centuries of syrupy ballyhoo, nauseating in its sweetness, have not spoiled Kashmir. It gives you a surging crescendo of feeling that life is a gorgeous and glorious adventure. A conquest ending in mighty triumph. A thing of beauty and strength and eternal youth. A spot where everything is victory and there is no defeat. If the world one day goes stark mad and starts another war, and if that war ends in annihilation—as experts say it will, I hope I'm in Kashmir when it breaks out because no invading madmen could fly the Himalayas to bomb this beauty spot from the earth. The passes could be blocked and we could let the rest of the world go hang.

And so with thoughts like these we came to Khanabul where there was a dancing fire and a great heaping dish of India's most famed and yet most slandered food—curry. Nectar could not have tasted better that night, whatever nectar might be.

We slept late next morning, then purred along wide smooth roads through poplar forests and blossoming apple orchards toward Srinagar. On both sides peasants worked their rice-fields with plodding energy. At a road bend was the sign, "Visitors are warned that the bringing of beef, in any form, into Kashmir is punishable by six months in prison." It seemed rather late to give the visitor this information.

Around another bend some men had punched a hole through the side of a mud house and were lifting a body out. There were doors and windows in the house (the windows were of oiled paper as in China), so I wondered

why they knocked the place to pieces to get the corpse out. It seemed that the dead man was an orthodox Hindu in this most orthodox of all Indian states and he had died, in defiance of priestly advice, on an unlucky day. When a man defies temple priests, of course, that's an open scandal and something must be done about it.

"The moon was wrong," my informant said. "That means the body could not go out a door or window because if it did anything that went into the house through those openings would bring only peril and disaster."

"So you break a hole through the wall, then seal it up afterwards to keep out the evil spirits?"

"Yes, sir; that is very necessary."

We came at last to the capital and stopped by a canal bank for directions. Like hungry chickens running for grain, men came racing and shrieking toward us. A hundred men; then two hundred more. They clamoured and shrieked, "Houseboat . . . buy my houseboat . . . I got the best houseboat." Hundreds more came on the run waving their arms and howling like Burma's barking baboons. They surrounded the car twenty deep. They opened doors and fairly tore the clothes off me trying to get me out to inspect houseboats.

These by the hundred were spread down the canal as far as I could see. They looked like basking crocodiles. A burly man with boiled rice caught up in his red beard shooed most of the touts away with some effective commands; climbed in the car with me and soothingly said: "Now, sir; I will make all the arrangements for your houseboat."

"But I don't want a houseboat. I can't use a houseboat. I want to know where the hotel is."

"But just have a look. It costs you nothing; I got a nice houseboat."

"I don't want to look and I don't want a houseboat. All I want is the hotel."

"Yes; I will take you to the hotel, but first I show you my houseboat."

"No, you will not take me to the hotel and you will not show me a houseboat." I had no chance to say more because the shriek went up: "He wants the hotel! This way, sahib. I show you."

Fifty men streaked away waving their arms. They hoped somehow to get money from me for guiding or from the hotel for bringing a cash customer. With all this help we found the one and only hotel in this most ballyhooed summer resort. Its gloomy exterior bore predictions of disappointment, but I went in and signed up, then sent the car around to the back.

The whole greedy clamour of the houseboat men was repeated. Coolies leaped at the baggage and tore it off the machine. Men clutched me pleading to cut my hair, shine my shoes, sell me a postcard or a Kashmir shawl. One idiot argued I buy a bicycle seat. A bicycle seat!

But help arrived in the form of two Gurkhas. These wiry guardians walloped about them with clubs. They whacked coolies over the head, knocked the razors and scissors from the hands of barbers and managed to drive the shawl salesmen away. Then the two of them, full of grins and pride, came over and saluted.

I sauntered in to survey the room. It held a bed, but no bedding; a table and a bureau, an electric light, some cocoa matting, a granite basin, a tin tub and that type of portable plumbing tolerated in only one country on earth —India. Four dollars a day for this!

Soon a stealthy parade of men came slinking up to the windows or whispering through the back door. "Would the sahib like a nice houseboat? . . . I can arrange for a nice trip for you. . . . Sahib, you want nice dancing girl? . . . Sahib, I am washing man; your clothes I make clean. . . . I am hairdresser, sahib; you will need a nice massage. . . . I bring girls for you. You want

nice girl your room to-night?" The Gurkhas came to the rescue again and I could hear the bonk-bonk of clubs on hard skulls.

I sat down and wrote my mother that if you were to take a mammoth cocktail shaker and dump into it the cities of Venice, Canton and Geneva, shake furiously for a century and spill the result over the world's highest mountains, the liquid would pour down into a valley and you'd have Srinagar, capital of India's most fabulous state.

Venice, because its citizens get from place to place by canals; Canton, not because it smells so high but because half its people live and die on boats; and Geneva, because it is ringed with snowcapped mountains all the year round. I recommend the Kashmir cocktail.

Chapter II

BESIDE THE SHALIMAR

THE main lane of the main town in Kashmir is the fast-flowing Jhelum River, snow-fed from the mighty Himalayas, lined by the most rickety, yet picturesque houses, schools, shops and mosques in Central Asia and peopled by velvety-eyed women and predatory salesmen who defeat their own ends by whining over and over like a cracked record: "No need to buy, your honour—just geef a look."

Houses are dilapidated even for India—none ever saw paint or a plumb rule. The bathtub is the river with par two baths a year for women, six for men, and privacy a rich man's luxury. Cooking is done in family boats made of timber and mud with vegetable gardens on the roof and neither doors nor windows. The houses are built as high as they'll stand so that veiled women may take an airing among rooftop cabbages without men looking down on them. To reach these rooftops you risk drowning in icy floods, suffocation in the smells which grow to crescendo as you reach the outer bridges, and broken necks if the stairs give way, which is always an active possibility.

Flanking the main canals are the streams of the Rug Washers; Canal of the Fur Merchants; Klong of the Carvers, and other slimy yet fascinating waterways through a city of 175,000 people of which only one—the rajah—owns the home he lives in.

You travel these canals in anything from a rough cattle or grain barge, which brings harvests from the Tibetan frontier, to fancy speedsters called shikarees

which are pushed along by a five-man crew wielding heart-shaped paddles and grunting encouragements. Competition is so keen between these shikaree chaps that some have their boats all hung about with camel-hair curtains, some supply cakes and tea, and some slip in Kashmiri courtesans at thirty cents an hour extra.

As you splash down the valley away from one batch of snows and toward another, merchants in Baghdad beards coo invitations at you from these rickety shops. If the boat captain stops he gets a dime if you don't buy, a commission if you do, so he is always thinking up excuses for putting you off his raft.

Six times in one voyage I went through the syrupy formality of being formally greeted and fawned over as I picked my way up gloomy stairways into these shops of Oriental odour, and six times I went in with the definite idea of buying Kashmiri jackets but came away without them. Seeing my interest in these, the merchant shooed me toward other things; spread his treasures of furs and carpets and shawls before me and had assistants hurry about with bowls of tea and pots of incense, but never could I be shown jackets; not even in the famed shop of Suffering Moses who specializes in such woollies.

Kashmir's original Suffering Moses has been dead these many years without a son. When his successor tacked a less picturesque label on the shop business skidded 80 per cent. So, being a wise man of the East, the suffering merchant, who was not suffering by name, went to court, paid $125, and had his name made Suffering Moses.

He has a neighbour whose sign proudly boasts: "Everyone else says theirs is the best shop in Kashmir. Ours is the worst. You can't afford to miss the worst; come in and look around. That much is free."

Still farther along that fast-running canal is one of the truly romantic spots of Kashmir . . . the caravan

compound. Here to a great stone square come the traders of distant empires. Pale-faced men of Turkestan, smiling Mongolians, stoics who have followed the golden road from Samarkand.

This, being May, sees the warehouses denuded of their treasures because upland passes have been closed with snow these seven months and will not open for another six weeks. But in the rest-houses hard by this journey's end for pilgrims and caravans were youths who had never seen a white man or a car or an electric light before pushing off from their distant hills a year or more earlier.

Practically no caravan coming in from Turkestan—where it's a crime to be a bachelor—gets back the same year. Like wandering gipsy bands in a prehistoric world, they start through the high valleys and plateaux on yaks and bring their own women. As the Himalayas grow steeper, the country wilder and the going tougher, they drop their women behind, with the hope and expectation that sometime, a year or more later, they will pick them up again as they return to their golden plains with salt and fish and lamp oil.

Then as they come to the perilous descent into Kashmir and Tibet the yaks are left also. The yak, being more sacred in Tibet than the cow is in India, must never leave that holy country. The men finish their long and perilous trek on ponies, generally reaching Kashmir by midsummer.

In Srinagar they are met by troops who march the caravans into the smelly compound, post armed guards at the gates and let no one out until he pays duty on the goods he has been carrying from six to nine months. If the boys sell out and collect their salt and oil early enough they start back for their homes the same summer. But to be caught in the highest peaks when winter howls its message of death is to be lost for ever; so few get back the same year.

The men I saw were sewing their goods into huge packsacks for the start homeward. They were a slant-eyed, cheery and self-respecting lot, frightened into hysterics when I pointed a camera at them. They shrieked and ran pell-mell for the protection of one old Kashgar who was calmly washing his drawers in a rice pot. He had made the trek to Kashmir several times before and to prove his bravery let me take his picture; then stood his son before the lens and watched the panic of that lad's face change to grins of delight when the shutter clicked without blowing his head off.

I've mentioned that the Maharajah of Kashmir and Jammu owns everything within sight or smell of his metropolis, and that's why white folks live on boats—they can't get land.

Within certain broad restrictions His Highness also makes the problem of food a bit worrisome. The rajah is a Hindu. Over 80 per cent of his people are Mohammedans. Hindus hold cattle—all cattle, dead or alive—to be holy and sacred. His Highness therefore makes it an offence punishable with six months in the bastille without the option of a fine if anybody kills, possesses, eats, buys, sells or gives away any part of a cow. So you see what chance you have to buy a beefsteak. The Mohammedans hold that pigs are filthy, irreligious, contaminated and a general nuisance. They won't allow pork in any shape or form to be sold in the bazaars although a little bacon is bootlegged.

But the streams swarm with fish—tasty, sporting fish. If you go to free streams to catch them they charge you heavy road toll; if you try to catch them near town you have to pay a license of $12 a week, a fee of $3 a day to rent a slice of the rajah's water and $1 a day for a guide. If you don't want to be bothered with all this you can visit the hatchery and buy them at prices ranging from $1.20 a pound upwards.

But as you wander along flower-banked roads you see huge herds of cattle. Old cattle and young cattle. Thousands of them. At night 234 of them feed on the golf course. These, you are told, are kept for milk alone. That's all very well, but a casual glance shows you half the wandering beasts are bulls and the market for bull's milk is about equal to the market for czarist rubles.

That's true, the herdsmen agree, but if a male calf is born in Kashmir it has to be carried along as a dead loss. What's more, the young bullock is insured and pensioned. When the beasts get too old and feeble to totter about and find their own food they are gently carted away to a state farm for aged cattle and kept in luxury until death comes by old age. The taxpayers foot the bill for the cow infirmary.

You might think all this is just a grandstand play so that the maharajah can show what a devout cow worshipper he is without really meaning to gaol people who eat a steak. Wrong. During my visit three men were in the lockup for having eaten a part of one of their own beasts which were either killed by accident or died of old age.

This makes Kashmir a puzzling place for anyone, most of all the Britisher. He sees the Union Jack flying from the custom-house or the club or the post office and feels that he's at home. He mails his letters with Indian stamps and pays his bills—his numerous bills—with Indian coin. Then he sees the soldiers and they are certainly not British. Not even the officers. And he has to pay duty to come into the country; toll to get out. If he gets into trouble with the gendarmes he faces an Indian judge with Indian laws and never quite gets to understand what these laws are.

Then he discovers that Kashmir itself is an empire of five states separating China, Russia and India. In

snouts—are the most vicious in or out of captivity. If the wandering gipsies lose their bears in combat they always eat them, the heart being fed to the children of the clan. You wouldn't expect dogs capable of butchering bears, but it frequently turns out that they do.

A few days later I was back near Srinagar and decided to have a look at the famed Shalimar. Like most other outsiders, I thought the Shalimar was a river. It's a garden. For six days a week it's a fairly routine Oriental garden, about two city blocks in size. It is the only garden in India which needs greenhouses to start its plants in spring.

Down its centre runs an irrigation canal split up by six small falls, and made beautiful by the splash of 200 fountains. For six days a week the water is off, the garden deserted. On the seventh day the water splashes and the garden is a weaving panorama of colour, as thousands of picknickers boil tea, play bridge, run races, sail boats and make love under the fragrant trees.

Here is a living denial to all those slanders which say the Asiatic is neither sentimental, romantic nor conscious of native beauty. It seems to prove that he is mostly too busy earning a living to pay much attention to the casual pleasantries of playing with his children or walking with his wife. When he gets time, he's just as much a family man as any, except perhaps the Jew.

In the Shalimar on Sunday you see the Indian at his physical and intellectual best. Up the paths come lordly husbands trying to be tactful to each of their two, three or four wives, while another lays out the food and minds the young under a spreading tree. You find him snapping pictures, playing a gramophone, sleeping, eating hard-boiled eggs, telling stories, leading little gaffers about by the hand, admiring the flowers, hoping it doesn't rain, sailing toy yachts and wondering about getting home. He's the same sort of father as you and I,

doing pretty much the same things in the same way—except for the four wives—and wearing far more exciting clothes while he's about it.

After my first visit I was telling a companion about these random impressions of floral glories. He stopped me in my tracks to say I'd not been in the Shalimar at all. I'd been in a smaller garden nine miles nearer town.

Next day I loaded two others into the car, told them of the romantic horticulture they were about to see, and drove out to the real Shalimar. Never have I felt so let down. This was Monday. The Shalimar was a field of waste paper and tin cans, falling leaves and eggshells, abandoned lunches, indolent cleaners and surly dogs. The river bed was dry and dirty, the centre teahouse a litter of cigarette butts. Stray beggars wandered about to see what they could find. Even the flower-beds were crushed.

We came away, visited a peach orchard humming with honey bees busy at spring chores, saw a potter send his four wives staggering away under loads of water jars, watched with horror while a peasant ran hot irons into the eyes of a bullock so that the plodding beast would not shy at the sights of the road. Then we headed back to town.

We swung around Dall Lake, just idling along. This take-it-easy attitude was lucky, because at this moment two boys running a race decided to cut across the car's path. The first got by, the second cracked into the side with a soft thud.

In sixteen years of driving I had never winged a human being. Now I went all limp with fear and regret. Automatically I stopped and got out. The boy was silent and still at the side of the road. From every direction people came running, first noisily; then as they saw the unconscious boy they fell silent. A feeble old man in a grey beard picked up the limp body and kissed it. He

kissed the eyes, the legs, the face. He tore off the clothes. Women came shrieking. Men cried. I had never seen a native adult cry before. These men—strong men of the hills with limpid chestnut eyes wept silently. Tears trickled down their lean cheeks.

According to every tradition I'd ever heard, they should have turned on me and stoned me. Instead, they pleaded, as a favour, that I take the boy to hospital. I got the boy, with his father, mother and grandfather, into the car, found a cop and gave him my name and hurried for the hospital. The boy opened his eyes and started to shake. He went all goose pimply. The old grandfather, crying like a baby, pleaded that I hurry.

We got to the hospital and the old man started to carry the boy up a hill but collapsed into a sobbing heap. I carried the boy in and walked through deserted corridors without seeing anybody. It gave me a spooky and unexpected feeling. I went into the operating-room. Empty. I put the boy on the table and went prowling. I could see nobody. Wards smelled of carbolic and death. Nobody came. I shouted. Nobody answered. I went out and asked where the doctor lived. Somebody took me to a house where a servant said the doctor was at a garden-party. There were no telephones and the man couldn't go to get the doctor. He was cold and indifferent.

Back in the hospital the operating room had filled with people who were kissing the boy on every inch of his body. I looked him over myself. He seemed perfectly all right. There was a bruise on his back and another on his cheek; but I couldn't find a broken bone, and there was no blood. I rolled up my sleeves, got some hot water and bathed the bruise. The boy cried. I told him to stand but he mournfully shook his head and said in halting English that he couldn't move his legs.

I left then, and hurried about the empty hospital

Bahoo and Author
Mapping out the Kashmir itinerary

The end of all India—and Author

Part of the Bannihal Pass, Upper Kashmir, highest motor road in the world

Bannihal Pass, Kashmir· a mountain hut used by the Author when

again. At last I found a man in the dispensary reading a love story and asked his help. He said he was no surgeon, couldn't be bothered looking at emergency cases. I told him he had to find the doctor, so he put away his book, locked up his room with a huge padlock, came and looked at the boy, said he was all right and brought out a form, all about caste and subcaste and who was going to pay the bills, and had people sign it with thumbprints.

A doctor came at last, examined the boy and argued with him a bit. When the lad insisted his limbs were numb and couldn't move, the doctor slapped him across the face; whereupon the boy jumped to his feet and started to cry to everyone's relief, especially mine and the old grandfather's. Then the doctor drove me to a police station which turned out to be more dining-hall than lockup. Detectives in loose pantaloons and flowing turbans sat around nibbling cakes and sipping tea. They handed me paper and asked me to write things down, and what about a sip of tea? I had two cups and went away expecting trouble.

Everyone to whom I mentioned this accident warned that greedy court pleaders would hound me because I was defenceless and alone in Kashmir, most anti-British of all Indian states. They'd bleed me to the bone, seize car and luggage and probably throw me into the damp bastille.

Next morning, sure enough, there came a deputation to see me, Kashmiris in their Sunday best headed by the grandfather who had an interpreter along.

"Hazoor," they began very formally, "our boy Mota . . . he is very good boy . . . he didn't mean to run into your car, hazoor . . . we are sorry. We ask your pardon a thousand times."

They handed me a bouquet of white iris and shyly went away. That night I went back to see the boy, but

he was out playing with his adoring grandfather, who had made him a sailboat.

I wandered back toward the hotel by way of the Mall, a shop-lined walk beside the Jhelum, and sat down on one of the many terraces watching gaily curtained boats splash downriver and listening to the music of a distant pipe band, when a shabby youth wearing a cast-off army coat slunk up and handed me an envelope labelled "Number 195."

I thought it was the usual plea from the usual merchant that I come for a look-see in his shop and didn't even open the thing. After a bit I drifted toward the music, which happened to be a wedding, and glanced at the message. One look and I was deep into the intrigues of Phillips Oppenheim and Edgar Wallace.

See if you can dope it out:

Number 195—I am feeling full of that old 184 and have seen the famous 165. Caught a glance of him from 150. He wore an 180 and had his 173 tied to a 187 as he proudly walked down 42. He was a 5 and felt like making 9 by 20, which he will when he meets 119. Reaching at last her little 71, he went in, and, ah, what a 155 she gave him! It put him up into 82 at one jump. "Hello, my wonderful. You look just like a 25," he said. "You wait, old boy, until you see my new maid 145," she told him. "I am just going to shave the 161 from my arms, dearest; what'll you have, a 28?" She then left him and a sight for sore eyes came in—a 24-23. I just thought you, 195, would like to know.

I didn't know what on earth that meant but like a thousand other news chasers I've often toyed with the idea of fiction and put it aside, not from the usual cause of laziness or lack of time, but because I simply dried up when it came to a love scene. Perhaps dour Scotch ancestry and upbringing in a home where outward signs of affection or amour were a scandalous indication of

weakness had something to do with it. So far as I know, neither my parents, my brothers, nor myself have ever used the words, dear, darling, sweetheart or any of that other rot. This note, however, started me on a search for romantic intrigue, and there was an ocean of it to spy upon in Kashmir.

Personable young officers on leave from their stations and gay young wenches out from England, a gland-stimulating climate and all those lakes and streams full of flower-decked houseboats combined to create wholesale amour. So I sat down and tried a love story—it was a colossal flop.

Chapter III

KASHMIR CRUSADER

NOW comes the story of a little man with a big job and a bigger heart; a Kashmir crusader who is the most hated yet most respected schoolmaster in the East.

He is the first man in all India who taught those holiest of Hindu holy men, the Brahmans, to play games. First in Kashmir to teach a native to swim, admit he lied or help a woman. First in Kashmir to arrange a wedding with a widow as bride. First missionary who made no effort—and still makes no effort—to convert people to Christianity, yet enjoys the full backing of the Church of England.

He is E. C. Tyndale-Biscoe, and to meet him first, let's go back to a cold spring day forty-four years ago. The mountain passes had just been opened, and stumbling through Himalayan snows on a horse came this blue-eyed Britisher to take over a mission school in Srinagar, then and now one of the most filthy yet fascinating cities on earth.

To this day few Kashmiris either bathe or wash their clothes in winter. Too cold, they say, and, besides, bathing is an unhealthy nuisance which drains oil from the skin and causes deafness, no less.

Biscoe, reaching his school beside the speeding Jhelum, was faced by 300 dirty-faced boys in filthy smocks. They lounged about with drooping shoulders and open mouths, and when asked any question gawked sleepily. This indolence was to some extent an affectation to show they were Brahmans whose life was one of ease.

Each boy seemed to have a puffy stomach, swollen out of all proportion.

"What's wrong with these boys?" Biscoe demanded. "Their stomachs . . . what's all this?"

"Fire pots," he was told.

"Fire pots?"

"Yes; to keep the boys warm. They sleep with the fire pots and carry them about during the day."

"Fire pots, fiddlesticks! What these boys need is exercise, and luckily I've brought something along." He went to his pack and brought out a piece of leather.

"This," he said, "is a football. It is used for playing games, and you boys are going to kick it about this afternoon."

"Do we get paid for kicking it?" the Mohammedans asked.

"Certainly not—you kick it for fun."

"Oh no, we must get paid to kick such a thing."

As for the Hindus, they fell back in terror. It was leather; the ball was made from the skin of a beast. That beast might have been a close relative. It was certainly an ancestor. It might even have been a cow. They were horrified.

A master stepped forward. "Sir, these boys are Brahmans; no Brahman may exercise. It is coolie work. It will degrade them. And with a leather ball. This is preposterous, impossible."

"I am the new master here, and these boys need exercise. We play this afternoon. I expect trouble, so each of you teachers arm yourselves with sticks and help me overcome it."

"That afternoon at three, school gates were opened and the boys pushed out like sheep to the butcher's," the master told me in recalling the incident. "Such a filthy and smelly crowd you never saw. They all wore long nightgowns over these pots, with clogs on their feet. As

we let them loose, they ran shrieking for their parents; these, armed with broom handles and bamboos, came hurrying to the rescue, but we drove enough boys through the mob to get two sides.

"The boys, as I'd expected, refused to play. They cried and blubbered and kicked. Some lay down moaning, so I took out my watch and said, 'Now, you fellows; five minutes. You start kicking this ball in five minutes or I start kicking you.'

"They refused. They spat and whined. I held my watch and when the five minutes was nearly up I called off the seconds. Still they refused to kick, so I and the masters went after those boys with sticks. We made them kick and they did kick, quite furiously, while angry crowds on the sidelines jeered, hooted and cursed, but took no actual action.

"Soon one boy was smacked in the face by the flying ball. He fell to the ground in horror. Leather had touched him—touched his face—his very lips! His face was defiled. If he touched it with his hand his hand was defiled. So, as he could not do as he would and would not do what he could, he did the next best thing, which was to lie on the ground and call on his assorted gods to save him.

"The crowd, meantime, grew more menacing. They leaped into the playing fields and my masters deserted me. Luckily the idea of sacred waters entered my head. The Hindu considers many rivers sacred and holy; among them the Jhelum. 'Take the boy down to the canal and wash him—there lies his salvation,' I commanded. This worked. Irate Hindus ceased threatening me and took the boy away to be bathed. The other players streaked for safety, but I brought them back and made them finish that game out."

"And did that end the opposition to football?" I queried.

"Gracious, no! It took me twenty years of alternate threat and persuasion eventually to kill that opposition, but kill it we did, and to-day not only our school, but every school in Kashmir, has passable football teams."

Most of the Biscoe boys also swim to-day, and that's another story of dogged persistence. At the time Biscoe came to Kashmir, the state had one of the most amazing laws on record. Srinagar, like Venice or Bangkok, is split by canals. Few people in the city swam but the law said that if any man, woman or child fell into the water, everyone should try to rescue him. This was a sane enough edict, but if the unlucky faller-in drowned, as hundreds did every year, any person who saw the drowning was promptly clapped into gaol for six months. The result was that if anyone spilled into the canals, everyone within sight or hearing ran pell-mell for liberty and the victim lost his life in solitude.

After two of his own boys drowned, the fighting padre petitioned everyone from maharaja to magistrate to abolish this law. They refused. Determined, however, that his own boys should swim, Biscoe gave them a year to learn, then doubled the fees on those who had failed. Half his pupils quit at once. That made no difference. The fees stayed double. To this day, any Biscoe boy who reaches the age of thirteen without being able to swim must quit the school or pay double. At fourteen he pays four times the normal rates, at fifteen eight times, and if he still refuses to swim he is expelled. Just now there are several lads who would rather pay four times the usual fee than learn to swim, but none paying the eight times penalty.

In one classroom is a list of those pupils who have swum Wular Lake, eight miles of cold and rough Kashmiri water. So changed has the spirit of the Biscoe school been that every boy strives to get his name there.

The school's worst tragedy struck them when in

April, 1934, five masters were out with two pupils who were attempting this grind. A sudden squall howled through the mountain passes, screamed across the lake, upset boats and killed the entire seven. One of the victims was the school captain and his body was recovered first and brought 30 miles by shikaree to the city. There, enraged relatives met it, hoisted the body on their shoulders and started marching it through the streets shouting that this was how Biscoe murdered his men. As it turned out, the leader of the exclusive Brahman community heard of this, rushed toward the parade in a tonga and stopped it, as only a Brahman can stop things in Kashmir. As Biscoe had been soundly hated by the Brahman community ever since that first afternoon when he made their sons do physical exercise with a leather ball, and later when he had the audacity to arrange a wedding with a Hindu widow as bride, this friendly move came as a surprise.

The city, however, rose in fury and demanded that the teaching of swimming be stopped there and then. Biscoe refused and the Brahmans had a big palaver in which to his further relief and surprise they said he was quite right, that the seven deaths were accidents, and that swimming should be carried on. It took ten days of active search to find the last body, and they were all cremated in a large funeral fire, while sorrowing relatives cursed. Undaunted, a dozen boys swam the lake in 1935 and 20 have announced their intentions for '36. Not only that, but the maharaja has finally abolished the prison term for witnesses of drowning.

Most of Biscoe's clashes with the priesthood have cropped up because of women, and since he was continually landing in hot water over females, he decided to add a girls' school, first of its kind in Kashmir, where 95 per cent of the women are kept veiled and under guard to this day.

He made it a rule that girl wives could not enrol. Girls of six to twelve were early applicants for knowledge; but of the first batch nearly all were married, and he shipped them off to their husbands again, whereupon people jeered. Did the man expect twelve-year-olds who were virgins? The idea was preposterous!

Nevertheless, the crusading padre persisted and now has 300 young maidens absorbing the classics and domestic arts. The only concession he had to make was in the matter of dress. When a Kashmiri girl marries, she puts on a white veil and enormous ear-rings and wears them from that time forward. These in time pull the ear out of shape, but are not removed until her body is dipped in the sacred waters before cremation. For girls over ten these matronly ear-rings are advertisements of respectability.

Biscoe girls, of course, had no ear-rings because they had no husbands. Gradually they ripened into their teens, still without ear-rings. People on the streets stared and jeered. This is what education did for girls! They could get no husbands! Girls without husbands were obviously loose of morals and good men avoided them. Sensible men would, of course, have no truck with educated women. The girls faced public ridicule at every turn. They were despised old maids at fifteen. So the order went out that Kashmiri dress, which is picturesque and warm, should not be used at all. The co-eds were not put in uniform, but were asked to wear the costumes of Rajputana, which are flowing silken garments of rich beauty but without the primitive savagery of the Kashmiri.

One of the tasks I had faced with great trouble was trying to photograph Kashmiri girls. It was not only difficult, but dangerous. One infuriated father walloped me with a clay pot out in the Shalimar Gardens, and several men came after me with sticks as I tried to get

snapshots of wives or daughters. With one exception, the only pictures I could get were of coolies or harlots, the harlots being frequently brought to my room by ingratiating pimps who knew I was anxious to make pictures. I preferred the coolies.

I figured, however, that the Biscoe girls' school would have beautiful talented girls. Here I could make pictures of the true Kashmiri beauties because they'd be enlightened enough to help me. I was wrong; not wrong about the beauty because there was much of it, but wrong about the pictures. Not one girl in that school would dare face the evil eye of a camera.

But it was the widow wedding that almost wrecked the Biscoe school. India, as you know, considers it a hideous sin on a woman's part if her husband dies. Regardless of the fact that girls of ten marry men of forty every hour of every day of every week, and regardless of the fact that Nature kills off forty-year-old husbands before ten-year-old brides, it's still a sin and the woman must for ever afterward go about and weep her sorrow. She dare not remarry; she must never dress up, go to a party or take a trip. She is a sinner and an outcaste, the servant of temple priests or of her own servants if she has any.

Biscoe took the first step toward ending the curse of widowhood, and here is the official church report of that adventure into matrimony:

> After much preliminary spade work, two men and two widows had been found willing to face the music and go contrary to orthodoxy. So, on the day before Ascension Day, 300 Brahman guests marched to fetch the bridegrooms, and brought them to the house of the two waiting brides at 6.30 a.m. But when the ceremony should have begun it was discovered that the padres had bolted! However, one of our Sanskrit teachers is a priest, so he performed the ceremony, for which heinous sin he is the target for the poisonous darts of the enraged priesthood.

They called the faithful to attend a monster meeting on Sunday at the principal temple, in order to let off wordy fireworks and excommunicate the Mission School staff. Some friends came with me to see the great show; but the meeting did not take place, for one of our old boys, who is in a high position in the state, asked an official to intervene, so he wrote to the head priest of the temple telling him that he must pay down in hard cash Rs. 20,000 [$8,000] before the meeting could take place, which he would forfeit should there be a disturbance.

The orthodox waited until two Sundays later, and then called a meeting at the same temple. But when the faithful arrived they found a policeman at the door, who told them that anyone who attempted to enter the temple precincts would be taken to the lock-up and kept there. The shackles of this disgraceful custom had been cracked if not broken.

After the padre had read me this 1928 report, I asked if other widows had found husbands since that day.

"About 40," he explained. "The marriage of 40 widows in six years out of a population of 175,000 is certainly not many, but when you consider the hideous hold the priests have over their people and the bitter hatred with which they view widow remarriage, you will realize that we have made progress."

"And what is your deepest satisfaction concerning your work here?"

"That we have taught our boys—even the highest of all Brahmans—the fact that manual labour is not degrading. Every boy in this school must work with his hands in the building, and assist with manual work outside. It is a rule here that once a month every boy, low caste or high, performs on the public streets the work of sweepers. Invariably he is hooted and laughed at, but he either goes on with it or leaves this school . . . and nobody has recently left.

"I also think that our boys helped end the traffic in women. Kashmir has always had beautiful women;

fair-skinned and dreamy-eyed. They are soft, feminine women, much in demand outside the state as ladies of the evening and nautch girls. The export of women was one of the principal industries here.

"For years ago this state was an autocratic dominion, ruled by the maharaja and by him alone. He was an absolute monarch and nobody voted for anything or anybody. This might have gone on indefinitely were he not a Hindu and 80 per cent of his people Mohammedans. Twenty per cent of the people had 100 per cent of state jobs.

"The Mohammedans at last became vocal and demanded rights; when they did not get them rebellion broke loose.

"The result was that the raja changed the constitution, and granted a parliament to which six of my boys were elected. The first act brought forth in that first Kashmir parliament was to abolish the traffic in women —what we call the White Slave trade. One of my boys sponsored the law and it passed.

"The following year penalties were stiffened to include the cat-o'-nine-tails for procurers who had formerly made annual buying tours through these mountains."

"Has this stopped the traffic?"

"Definitely not, but it has cut it by 75 per cent and eventually we will stamp it out."

The Biscoe school, in spite of having defied practically all the deep-rooted Hindu traditions, has grown steadily. To-day it has 1,400 boys who go in for most of the sports and crafts practised by boys all over the world. It took twenty years of steady coaxing to get up a band, because Hindu lips dare not touch alien things, least of all things that have been touched by others. The boys, after twenty years, agreed to put lips to a wooden flute, but it took another five to make them put lips to a brass bugle.

Fifteen years of coaxing were necessary to persuade boys to row, because rowing, in a canal town like Srinagar, is the very lowest of all coolie tasks. To-day almost every Biscoe boy rows, and they have regattas every week, even in late autumn when the snows fly.

Strange as it sounds, not a solitary pupil among the 1,400 boys and 300 girls in the school has ever in his life seen India. Just a few hundred miles over the mountains lies their neighbouring country, the mad, savage land of Hindustan, but not one in 1,700 has ever been there, and to this hour the padre has not been able to persuade his classes that the world is round or the sea salty. The priests have told them the sea is made of butter, and that they still believe.

"In the late nineteen-twenties when money was freer, I did arrange one pilgrimage. I wanted to prove to the masters that there was on earth an Oriental country that was clean instead of filthy, that had free women instead of domestic slaves, and that did not abuse the beasts of the field. That was Burma. I sent four masters to Burma, and they came back full of excitement and delight. They also said they had definitely tasted the water of the sea, and it was salty, not made of butter. Some day, when money flows again, we will repeat that voyage and show Burma to some of our pupils."

"And what, after forty-four years is your principal disappointment?"

"Dishonesty!" the padre exclaimed. "We have never once in all those years of advancement had an honest examination. The Indian mentality is completely amazing at all times, but never more so than in education. He does not desire or want knowledge. He will not, out of his own curiosity, ask questions or seek answers. He wants a degree. He wants to pass. He wants a title even if it's only a failed B.A. So he is a parrot. He learns answers to certain questions by heart, and that is

all he cares about. Deeply as I regret it, he steals much of his knowledge and then promptly forgets it. The only advance I can claim in this direction is that now many of our boys admit that they have cheated on examinations."

Two other selfless crusaders I met in those wind-swept uplands were Ezra Steiner and his wife Anita who were on the long trek back to their home in Pandora, Ohio, from the Tibetan highlands. A natural question to ask Steiner was "Why is Tibet a forbidden land? Why is no one allowed to go there? Why is it eternally cut off from the rest of the world?"

The quiet answer of this gaunt man, who is himself part mystic, was as startling as his own 22-year fight to reach the ridge of the eternal snows.

"Because robbery is a licensed trade in Tibet. A man sets himself up as a robber baron and is entitled by law to loot and plunder all who pass his way, so long as he pays his toll."

"And can they rob with violence?" I asked. "Can they shoot or behead or throttle their unwilling victims?"

"Oh, yes." Steiner smiled. "They do murder too. That's why people can't go into Tibet. Not so much that the Tibetans won't let them in—although that is difficult enough—but other governments, notably the government of India, won't let you leave their own country. It is almost certain death to go into Tibet and world passport regulations forbid it."

Perhaps more surprising than licensed bandits are the Tibetan wooing houses; the funeral rites, at which everybody must serve hard liquor to a yak—a sort of mountain cow with thick hair on his chest; and the practice of polyandry, whereby women have from one to a dozen husbands, and no man is entitled to own property. It's all in the name of women.

Let's look at a wooing house, as a fair start. There

is one of these in Steiner's village, which is 17 miles on the Indian side of the Tibetan frontier.

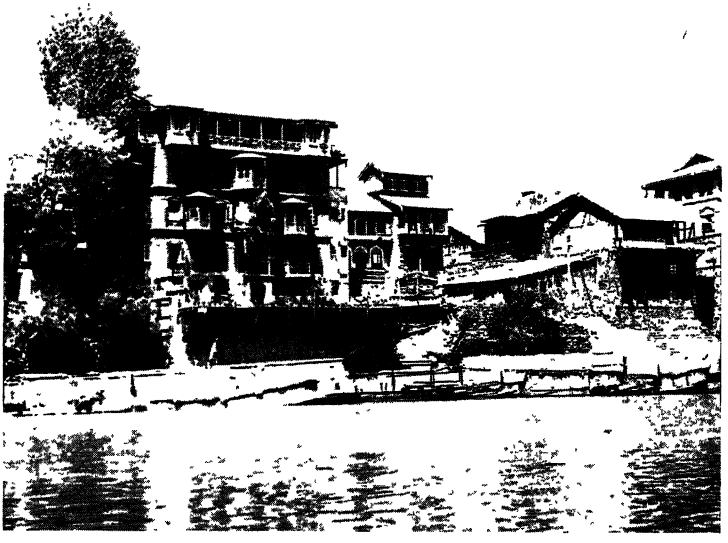
When a girl of the Bhotiya people—a cross between Chinese, Tibetan and Hindu—reaches the age of twelve, she is entitled to go out at night, make all the necking dates she feels like making, and stay as long as she likes without a parental bawling out. Accordingly, she never spends another night at home as long as she lives. On the night of her twelfth birthday she goes to the wooing house, there to learn the art of love from others who have served a long apprenticeship there. This place is called the Ramand. In it girls are supposed to knit, weave, do carving, make carpets and generally practise the useful arts, as well as take illustrated lectures in bedroom practice and etiquette.

Outside, peeking into the wooing house, are the young bloods of the village. They watch and spy and giggle and flirt. They take the girls off on big league necking parties. They take a long while to make up their minds as to who and which is the finest girl. When they do select the one that makes the old heart go pitter-patter fastest, the boys round up a gang, arm themselves with clubs and shillelaghs, and lay in ambush for the girl. When she steps out of the wooing house, they club her and drag her away to the home of the selected husband; and there she stays.

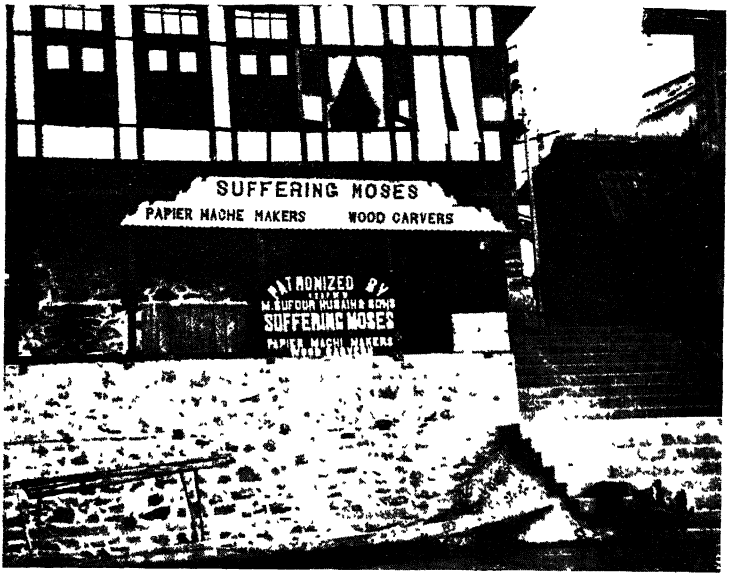
The girls are supposed to shout and fight against this abduction, but they don't. They like it. They're delighted. The boys, too, are supposed to club them down in approved cave-man style. But they don't. They just go through the motions and march away with the girl of their choice who, by this time, may have several children of vague paternity.

Hearing all this from Steiner, I got the idea girls were married at about twelve. This is a wrong conclusion! A fair average for Bhotiya brides is twenty.

Ploughing rice beds in Kashmir



Canal bank scene, Srinagar, Kashmir



The house of Suffering Moses, Kashmir's most famous merchant

A worried merchant in Kashmir, where the income-tax is 60 per cent

"Then they spend eight years in this wooing house?" I quizzed.

"That's a fair average."

"And all that time they are sleeping and flirting with every Tom, Dick and Harry who comes along?"

"That's right."

"What happens after marriage?"

"Morals don't improve much. I'm afraid there really are no morals. We'll look at a funeral, to explain this. A funeral is called a durung, and is a startling drunken spree lasting three to seven days. The Bhotiya people are nomads who wander great distances over the Himalayan foothills. Often they are away months on end. Men fall victim to the perils of the road—disease, bandits, landslides, and all sorts of things. If one dies, his body is burned at once or sometimes fed to eagles; but when the men return to their village, they supposedly have his spirit with them.

"They go off then to Tibet and buy a yak. Only Tibetan yaks are sacred. So they buy one for about twenty dollars, and into the yak's body supposedly goes the spirit of the departed man. Now comes a feast of celebration and great ceremony. The yak is fed eighteen different kinds of food and as many different kinds of liquor as can be made. Yak and mourners get horribly drunk. They drink and eat and carouse by day. At night all the mourners go off to their own houses with different women. They take a friend's wife or a single girl or anybody who is handy except their own wife. They never take their own wife. She goes with somebody else."

"For every night of the seven nights?"

"Yes."

"And do they put on this yak feeding and whoop-de-doop every time a man dies?"

"A man only dies once," Steiner said, a bit puzzled.

"No, I mean do they mark every man's funeral with this ceremony?"

"Oh, yes; practically every man, anyhow."

"So that a woman doesn't spend much time in her own home with her own husband?"

"Well, she is always there when there is no ceremony."

"I see," I nodded. "It's all very matey. But about this polyandry. These women who have six to a dozen husbands each?"

"That is in Tibet proper. I am, as I say, in India. The place where I live was Tibet until lately but . . ."

"I understand that, but what about the six husbands?"

"Well, it's just as you put it. A woman has several husbands; legally she has only one, but all his brothers are her husbands too. When I say legally only one husband I mean all the children are put down as his children, although they carry the mother's name. Property is all held by the women and can be inherited only by women. In the case of very large families of brothers, the oldest generally marries and the youngest generally becomes a monk. A red-robed monk."

"Red seems to suit that country," I suggested. "But tell me; who does the wooing? If the woman is the boss and she rules her harem of brotherly husbands, who selects the husband? Does she do it, or does the man go out and select the girl of his choice?"

Steiner looked a bit puzzled. So did Anita, his wife, who sees other white faces about twice a year. "Sorry, I don't really know. I must look into this when I get back. In the wooing houses, of course, men make the selection but not all brides become brides that way; I'll chase into it."

Steiner is probably as determined and tenacious a

man as ever set out to do a job. We find him first as a dry-goods clerk in Peoria, Illinois, in 1905. To the town comes a Y.M.C.A. lecturer, talking about missions in distant outposts. He says that of all the countries in the world, only one bars all missionaries regardless of who or what they represent or preach. That country is Tibet. Right there and then Ezra Steiner, ribbon clerk, decided that he was going to be the first missionary in Tibet. And he was!

The Y man discouraged him at first. Said he needed a college education, as a starter. Next day Steiner quit his ribbon job and enrolled at college. To pay his way through, he ran a boarding-house. This took so much of his time that he failed a couple semesters; but in 1913 he graduated and pleaded with the Mennonite missions to send him to Tibet. They refused, said it was suicidal; but offered a job in Central India provided Steiner would agree to a ten year stretch without leave, furlough or holiday of any kind.

He hurried off to consult his girl. She said take the job, so Steiner asked her if she'd come with him. She would. Just as soon as she finished her nursing course she'd come with him as a missionary-bride.

That suited Steiner, so about 1914 they came out to Central India for ten searing, sun-baked years. At the end they demanded "Now can we go to Tibet?"

"No, sorry, but you cannot. Would you like to have some holidays, then go back to India?" the mission replied.

"If that will lead us to Tibet, yes; if not, no. We are through with India."

"Then will you take a job with the North American Indians in Montana?"

"Yes, I'll take any job in the world provided you'll send me to Tibet."

The mission refused. Home went the Steiners.

They got their passage paid, but not one hour of vacation for their ten years of work.

They started to round up their own mission. They sought out friends, pleaded for money, sang the song of the land of mystery, and eventually got promises of enough money barely to keep body and soul together. Then came years of pleading and urging governments to let them into the bad lands. That succeeded too. Eight years ago the Steiners opened their mission.

At first they were actually in Tibet; then they shifted down to that triangle of mountain between India, Nepal and Tibet. Now, because their oldest child, Bradford, is seventeen, and it's time he was getting some schooling, they have dug up enough money to go home. They are leaving their mission, probably the only completely independent mission in all Asia, in the hands of Bhotiya workers. Some day they'll go back.

Many an author meeting up with missionaries here and there has scoffed at them as sepulchral killjoys. As a man of no particular religious training, background or inclination I carry no torch for missionaries as such. I do speak up for them as men. By and large the chaps I've met carrying the gospel through India, Africa and the South Sea Islands are about as courageous and selfless a lot of regular fellows as you're likely to meet anywhere. I mention Biscoe, Steiner and my friends Reginald Bennett, of South India, and E. M. Moffat, of Bombay, to prove the point.

Chapter IV

KHYBER AND BEYOND

LIGHTNING and landslides, an idiot, an invalid and a witch of the woods, all helped slow us down as our one-car caravan pushed off from Kashmir to Khyber.

We had just swung on to the Jhelum Road—which resembles the Niagara Gorge or the Valley of the Colorado—when we picked up the idiot, as weird a creature as I ever hope to look at. He was sitting on the road with his back to us, so we shot him a buzz on the horn. He got up slowly and surveyed us through black, deep-set eyes in a face that had no nose. He wouldn't get out of our path, so I got out to lead him away when he laughed a shrill wild laugh like the night cry of a hyena. I coaxed him to the side of the road, not wanting to touch him because he seemed to be a leper; then climbed back in the car. But when we started, he jumped in front again; then commenced running zigzag from ditch to ditch, before the machine.

He must have practised that run for months. It was a smooth, tireless motion, like the flight of a swallow. He gave us no chance to pass but just ran, light as a bird, ahead of the car. From time to time he looked back and delivered that awful laugh. His feet touched the road so lightly that they raised no dust, and he went along in the poplar shadows like a misty ghost. After a mile had gone, there were three other cars behind us, honking furiously; but we had no way of getting past, so pulled to the side to let them try. From the tail of the parade a mail truck came up, and the driver, having met this

ambling imbecile before, had a man get out and hold him while we all got by.

By the roadside were boys and old men cracking big stones into little ones, and once when we stopped for a drink, several greybeards crowded the car to show us fingerless hands. They'd been holding big stones in their hands and hitting at them with poor aim for so many years that they had long since knocked their fingers off. Now they had some tricky way of holding the stone and the hammer with thumbs and stubs of bone and seemed quite content.

The road gradually grew rougher, wilder, higher. The river churned and boiled far below and overhead clouds gathered. Soon lightning danced across the mountain, and we could see it raining down the valley. We passed the grave of a raider plunk in the middle of the road; twin paths swung around this mound of fluttering banners, and in the shadow of these passing pilgrims had left offerings of food, money, oil and, in one case, bullets. Soon afterward we ran into our first landslide and were hung up an hour. During that hour the rain caught us, lightning danced and cold wind moaned from the north.

When the road gang said we could go ahead I walked hoping to get a picture of the machine threading that cracked ledge 800 feet above a roaring river. I was in time to see a boulder about the size of an elevator cut loose from the overhanging cliff and come bumping toward the car.

I shouted a warning. Baboo, the alert mechanic, gave the machine one tremendous shot of petrol. It leaped ahead, then stalled; but it had come far enough to be saved from demolition. The two tons of stone came rumbling down like a big Bertha, scraped the edge of the luggage carrier, knocking it off as if it were made of cellophane, and spreading havoc down the hillside. My

clothes, bed, typewriter and food went tumbling toward the flooded river but caught in the churned remains of an earlier landslide, where only a cross between an Everest coolie and a mountain goat could get them back again. Luckily a girl came along who possessed these characteristics and she, without the aid of wings, mirrors or magic, retrieved most of the gear.

The landslide completely blocked the back road for the rest of the night and we wondered if it would go out ahead of us. Rain was swirling down in rivulets now, and the whole hillside seemed to be moving and heaving about like a mammoth pot of boiling porridge.

We had so much assorted camping kit there wasn't a hope of getting both it and ourselves into the car, so the bearer and I hung to the sides shielding our faces from the hissing rain. The road was up, up, up, all the way and the height made it colder and colder; yet the radiator, being blocked off by supplies, sent up plumes of white steam. Four more landslides cut us off, but we blocked up the car with stones and went ahead to shove the blood-red clay over the side with our hands.

During one of these combats, which were more fun than hard work, an old man came out of the gathering gloom and whispered between peals of thunder: "Sahib, I have here the secret of the jungles." He pushed a greasy pot toward me, but I kept on working. "It is the one and only cure for the rheumatics," he said. "It makes the old to grow young again, the wrinkles to disappear. It will grow for you new hair."

I always was a sucker for a hair tonic, so I quit trying to make a road out of a mile-high mountain and showed interest. "Tiger fat," the old man shouted while lightning danced. "It cures all. It grows hair. For one rupee, it gives you new hair." He was well into his stride now, a proper mountain medicine man with a prospect

on the string and his sales attack was sound enough to sell me, which isn't so sound at that.

By this time it was night, cold and dismal. The rain stopped. High on a distant peak we could spot the lights of Murree, hot-weather home of the frontier army; but before we got there, eight cops had viewed us with dismay, talked about gaol and written down names and numbers.

The first was at a place with the non-Indian name of Sunnybank, where we were put under arrest for using the mountain road after dark. I explained as best I could that we had come through from Kashmir, storms and landslides had held us up, our car just missed demolition, we couldn't have reached town a minute sooner and what were we supposed to do—sit out on a ledge all night? The police didn't know. They were Indian police and their book of instructions said that on no account whatever were cars to go over the passes after dark. Clearly I was an offender; clearly, therefore, I should be gaoled, and gaoled I was.

In such a case there is only one thing to do in India. Follow the Napoleonic maxim that the best defence is always an attack, go into a rage and call people names. This worked fine, and we got loose, but seven times more between Sunnybank and Murree, I was called on to go through the motions of being an outraged and infuriated colonel or somebody. We eventually made things worse by stalling, out of petrol, and abandoning the machine in the bazaar where it blocked traffic.

Murree itself was a typical military hill station at the height of its swank season. Discipline was a bit slack but not too slack; drinking a bit heavy but not too heavy; the clubs gay and crowded. I was quite content when mechanics said they'd have to send to Lahore and get a new and bigger luggage carrier and this would take four days or more. When this came we rolled down on

Rawalpindi, then up the trunk road to Peshawar, gateway to the Khyber Pass, so-called grim gash of sudden death.

Khyber itself was quiet as a tomb; Peshawar was sleeping the long restless sleep of the hot weather. I went up through Khyber a few times, being a bit shocked on the first visit to see tourists gaping at the sights from taxicabs and a bunch of youthful tribesmen downbound to the bright lights on shiny bicycles. The only concession these beardless Pathans made to the convention which calls this the boulevard of sudden death was that they carried rifles over their backs, dirks and shells in their belts.

Some pictures I'd taken that first time up proved duds, so I rolled along a second time, to camp patiently at a certain bend in the pass and watch the camels come plodding through until some of the more shaggy and picturesque fellows formed themselves into a decent photographic composition. At Jamrud, the mud fort where you register for admission to the pass, a bony tribesman with a circle of mascara around his dark eyes and his hair bobbed like a girl's stepped up and salaamed with a grin.

"You want a guard?" he asked in English. "Me guard, good shot."

He patted his rifle, which was laced in a leather case. I asked the clerk about guards in general and this candidate in particular. At certain times personal bodyguards are necessary in Khyber but this was not one of those times because everything was peaceful as a pasture. However, the clerk recommended this chap as capable and courageous, so I took him along for company. He was a native sniper normally on duty in a lookout tower in the pass but now on leave, and for a half-dollar he'd see that I was not shot at. Not much, anyhow.

As we swung up the low entrance to the pass clouds

grew blacker and blacker and it began to spit tiny raindrops. We saw no caravans and the curve where I'd expected photographic beauties was deserted and dreary, blacker than a raider's heart. We climbed higher and the rain stopped but still no caravans. Far off on the right of the pass women were harvesting meagre wheat crops, their men loafing in the field with ready rifles.

Beyond Shagai Fort we entered a wide space studded with lookout towers architecturally different but defensively the same as those in Waziristan. These were rounded, like lighthouses, higher than the squared forts in the Kohat zone.

"My home," the painted guardian exclaimed, pointing toward a large one. I'd been in a sort of daydream, possibly anæsthetized by the man's pungent bazaar perfume, and jumped in surprise when he spoke.

"You would come in for tea?" he asked a bit shyly.

"Delighted."

We stopped just off the road. He framed his hands megaphone-shape and shouted a command in Pushtu; then, beckoning me to follow, dropped into a shallow trench and started crawling on hands and knees toward his walled tower.

"Can't we just walk?" I asked, not liking the feel of hard, bumpy mud on bare knees.

"No," he said. "Might get shot."

"Shot?"

"Yes, sahib, from yonder tower." He pointed vaguely off toward Afghanistan where I could see no tower, and went puffing onward.

"But if the man up there is going to shoot he had plenty of chance out there on the road," I offered by way of argument.

"No, sahib; no man is ever shot on the road here. It is free ground. We give our word of honour. If Pathan shoots Pathan here in his own land, that is our business

and we do what we will about it. But if a man is shot on the road that brings in the army. The road is a British road, sahib, and if a man is killed on the road then all the family of the man who killed him are fined and there is much trouble." (A fine of $80 and seizure of a rifle is an average penalty.) "My enemy cannot shoot me now. This is perfectly safe except in the rains it is full of water and that is not pleasant."

"If you stood up here he would shoot you?"

"Oh, yes, sahib. He is now watching for he saw us get into the trench, but I don't think he will shoot you."

You can see how helpful it was to know this. We were soon up near the walls and could see two rifles poking out to cover our advance. Then we went inside the place which smelled of cattle and dust heaps and dirty clothes. The lower part of this domestic fortress was a compound with donkeys and cows tied in it. On a higher level women were stewing something in a big pot; above that, on two different levels, men lay about with rifles. Only one, a white-bearded buccaneer, was actually peering out at his neighbour's tower as though itching to get a shot at him.

I was presented to this old boy. He shook my hand ceremoniously, looked on his son with admiration, bawled out some order to the women and then went back to his firing-step. This malik was the headman, it turned out. The others in his tower were strangers. Not blood relatives at all. But since they were too weak financially and physically to defend themselves in strongholds of their own, they came to him, pledged eternal labour and devotion, and craved protection quite in the way serfs and vassals craved protection from noblemen in the days of the Black Douglas.

In the tower there was a picture of King George, a picture of a dead man hanging by his feet to a tower like

the one we were in, and a crude crayon drawing of a woman with her breasts cut off. This, it seemed, was the reason for the eternal hatred of the clan next door. Each man in the family, seeing my interest, undertook to explain just what had happened to the woman, who was herself down in the female quarters, but since 90 per cent of what they said was in Pushtu, which I didn't understand, and the 10 per cent I did follow was gruesome and obscene, I won't bother you with it.

A girl brought tea up in a pot-bellied jug. I was surprised at that because the code of behaviour on the Afghan border is so stringent that no woman comes into the presence of a strange man, even in her own home. The old chieftain must have understood my surprise because he soon explained that this girl was about to take the blue spot, that is become a professional lady of the evening, in Peshawar, where the more ardent grow rich before they marry. This girl was engaged, they explained. Her groom-to-be was in Britain's army but he had three years to serve and the family thought it best that during that time the girl be occupied and earn her keep, so what better occupation for a girl of her charms than selling those charms?

I stayed there drinking in tribal lore and tribal tea most of the afternoon, then pushed on to Landi Kotal near the Afghan end of the pass and only place in the world where Englishmen have a curfew law—a strictly enforced curfew law—for their wives.

A quarter to five is teatime in most of India but in the heart of this so-called murderous highway it's time for women to accept a good-bye kiss and flee the coming darkness; for Khyber is always Khyber, bold and bloody, untamed, unbeaten, triumphant and above all unpredictable. For three thousand years insurgent hillmen have held this mountain gash against all comers. They believe that man's job in life is to keep his home

from invasion, his women from violation. To the one who breaks either of these twin laws comes death.

Forty men and boys were massacred just beyond the pass the week before I got up there. The cause of that slaughter was as old as these very hills. A youth with some real or imaginary grievance took a pot shot at Khan Sanghi Khan, an old and respected patriarch, and spilled him down the hillside. The instant he took a crack at old Sanghi Khan that lad knew his life was a matter of hours. But the clan of Khan valued their old patriarch above one mere youth. They were not content with a life for a life, so they marched on the village where the murderer had come from and butchered every male creature in it—twenty-five of them, including the smallest babies.

The villagers, of course, knew there was blood on the moon, expected a raid and prepared for it with their own resources. Those women who would go were sent away; the gates were locked and double watches posted in the towers. The defenders put up a stubborn enough battle to kill fifteen invaders but every last male was eventually slaughtered, beheaded and draped in the sun for all to see. This massacre drew two paragraphs in border papers but was feature front-page stuff in the south.

My efforts to get into Afghanistan proper were a failure that day, so I had to come back a third time with assorted documents to cross the crimson barrier strung over the road at Minchni Khanda. The barrier is a gate similar to those used by railways at level crossings and any toddler could walk around it, but if you, or I, or anyone else does step into Afghan territory without a collection of documents, gaunt guards in steel helmets three sizes too big come chasing after you making grunts. It's a bit childish, like kids ringing doorbells and running away. If you stood and looked at the guards they'd probably make a bewildered retreat, but no one does.

On the other hand, Afghans coming into British India pass, in the language of British passports, "freely and without let or hindrance."

Together with a cynical Scot who's idea of fun was pedalling a pushbike through tribal bad lands and sampling the most conglomerate mess of food any stomach was ever called on to crack up, I loafed around the border a week then lit out for Waziristan via the Kohat Pass rather than toward the Afghan capital of Kabul where, among other distressing situations, you go to gaol if you drink a cocktail or walk the streets after dark.

For savage beauty the Kohat Pass is more inspiring but less ballyhooed than Khyber. Its jagged rocks are red and white and black and gold. Its pinnacles are higher, its grades steeper, its people more rebellious. Not only men, but ten-year-old lads, are armed to the hilt, yet when you meet up with them they are cheerful, proud, but above all hospitable. At Bannu, where Brigadier Francis Maynard of Ottawa holds the fort, you give soft civilization a temporary farewell and push on from fort to fort to Baluchistan via the bad lands.

To explain this business of bad lands is a bit involved but in a general way that area you see on Asiatic maps labelled Indian Empire is divided into three parts: British India controlled from London; native India controlled by the rajahs, nawabs, begums and other picturesque potentates of the homeland; and tribal territory where both have some say but neither has much. In this country a blow to a man, an insult to a woman, has only one result—death. Under no condition is there any reprieve. If a man comes across his enemy asleep or sick that does not save him. He is slaughtered. A blood feud never ends.

The most mobile and active military force in the British Empire, the Tochi Scouts, knew of the massacre

to avenge Sanghi Khan but did nothing to prevent it or stop it once it started, so you or I normally ask why.

"Worst thing we could have done," an officer explained. "If even one male had survived that slaughter, he would have carried on the feud. His whole life would have been aimed toward just one purpose, to avenge the slaughter of his father. As it is now they are all dead and that particular feud dies with them. We may in that particular area [Madda Khel] have a few years' peace now."

All these tribesmen are prepared at a moment's notice to forfeit their own lives in defence of honour and homeland. Which brings us into contact with Flight-Lieutenant Sinclair of Winnipeg.

In the autumn of 1934 the frontiers were aflame as they often are at that time of year because the tribesmen haven't much to do except fight. Their crops are in and distant snows have already blocked in Persia's caravans for the winter. Hence, there is no one to loot.

The air force had to go out to see where tribal snipers were ganging up because every once in a while they come right down and attack Peshawar. It was dirty flying: gusty winds; above jagged mountains. Snipers peppering at you from unseen crevices. Many aeroplanes were struck in that aerial inspection but none grounded in the pass.

Sinclair, leading the squad, went farther over the Khyber hills but didn't come back. His squad anxiously sought him out from every angle but had no luck. He had crashed in a ragged valley so remote and inaccessible that none could see him even from the air. He lay unconscious in the wreckage of his plane, his leg and arm shattered and his face torn.

There he was found by tribesmen who also found the sign fastened on the inside of every R.A.F. machine, saying that to anyone who gets the victim back to head-

quarters a substantial reward will be paid. But no tribesman can be bought for money. To be sure, thousands and thousands of them get paid every day of the year for guarding roads which they don't guard, but honour is not tied up in such graft. The point now arose: Had Sinclair, by spying from the air, soiled tribal honour?

The elders of the tribe decided he had not. What's more, they decided to get him back. So they rigged up a stretcher and for four days and nights of howling gale relays of tribesmen carried the Winnipeg airman over the hills of sudden death. So many of them helped carry the stretcher on which the stricken man lay that when they came within shot range of British outposts there was every possibility they'd be sniped as a hostile raiding party.

Sinclair was still unconscious, his leg now poisoned and puffy, but eventually an ambulance met the carriers, hurried the officer off to hospital and there, by amputating the leg, were able to save his life. These tribesmen would gleefully have shot Sinclair down from the air. Perhaps they did. When he was down, however, they carried him in as tenderly as possible and then insisted on making camp outside the very operating-room and staying there a fortnight until the airman's life was definitely out of danger. On the way back to their own fortresses with a reward of nearly five thousand dollars, they came across several other planes and instantly opened fire.

Chapter V

HOMELAND OF HOMICIDE

FROM time to time papers, magazines, films, and even the opera break into a rash of glorification for some manly service in distant outposts.

A cycle of musical ballyhoo for the Mounties is followed by one for the Foreign Legion, not to mention the Coast Guard, the Pony Express, and the good old Texas Rangers.

In Waziristan live the unsung gallants not yet discovered by Tin-Pan Alley. They are the Tochi Scouts, most exciting and highest paid service in the British Empire, only branch of the entire army where no man, regardless of age or wage, is allowed to marry.

Here are the eyes and ears—and some say the brains—of Britain's Indian army. Twenty-two white officers controlling 2,000 brown snipers drawn from every tribe on the frontier, who spy out the distant hills and actually guard the army when it's on the march!

The scouts, whose headquarters are at Miramsha, are the only branch of the service who can, and do, wheel into action on their own responsibility without the okay of politicians. As all know, the army dare not fire a shot until war lords give them the nod. The scouts say, hang the politicians, let's at 'em, and at 'em they go.

Probably nothing explains the swashbuckling attitude of the rank and file of Tochi Scouts so well as their sentries. Britain's army all across the frontier, sometimes, as at Peshawar and Razmak, concentrated in gangs of 7,000 and more, makes every sentry patrol every beat with his loaded rifle chained to his wrist and waist so

that a raider, even though he butchers the sentry, can't get away with the precious shooting rod.

The scouts, spread over a far wider and far tougher area than any brigade, use tribesmen as sentries, don't bother to chain man to gun and have never lost a rifle. If figures indicate just how desperate a country is, I mention that Waziristan has a half-million people and three murders every day of the year! In few of these do the scouts interfere except as umpires, and this is good but rather unbelievable fun in which the political agent, an attaché at scout headquarters, acts as referee in chief.

He represents King George. With the patronage of the great white monarch he is considered an honest and honourable man. To him there often come hairy warriors from one or more clans proudly petitioning that he draw up a peace pact. The family of Durali is tired of sniping the Clan of Majan and craves harmony.

The agent says, sure, it's a pleasure to be a peace-maker. That's part of his job and he does it with avidity. The scouts go out and get the name and fingerprints of every man entitled to come to the conference. They are checked up in record rooms to see if they have been agitators or gang leaders; if not, they are permitted to attend the palaver. The fact that they have been murderers is of little importance, but agitators are strictly barred.

A date is usually set for, say, Tuesday, but the clansmen don't turn up until Thursday. They are polishing up their last-minute score sheet and showing their almighty independence. At last they send word that they are ready. Two hundred scouts fix bayonets, buckle their backs and line the ramparts of the fort where the powwow is to be held. Over the hills come two warrior bands, each man either a blood relative or a sworn enemy. Their rifles have been left behind beside the fluttering banners which mark the graves of their latest

victims. As they near the fort machine guns are trained on them and this surveillance is never relaxed.

At the wire they are met by an assistant to the murder umpire who has the fingerprints taken weeks or even months before. As each man's name is called he steps forward, is quickly searched, his fingerprints compared and in he goes. About a hundred men pass through in an hour, and by that time the place has begun to smell higher than a cancerous camel. Finally all are seated before the agent and the gruesome business of checking off murder for murder begins.

"Sahib, we come to make peace but it is only fair that we of the Clan of Habib get recompense for sixty rifles, for 37 of our men have died by shot these past five months . . ."

"Name them! Name them!" shout the opposition.

The old warrior snaps back: "You yourself shot a woman . . . you it was who killed Sherani."

"And you killed Jan," they croak. This is a signal for the real haggling of the palaver to get started. Each murdered man is checked off by the name of the one who killed him. It is all known long in advance. The tally is about even; if it were not, they would not have come here.

The agent figures it all up like a clerk in the bazaar. He gives the boys a pep talk about the absurdity of these blood feuds which denude the country of the best men, fines each side something in the way of cash, guns or ammunition just as a face-saving device and draws up the document. Sometimes it is supposed to assure peace from that day forward; sometimes it's just an armistice over harvest time. That part makes no difference because sooner or later some young buck tries his aim and the war fires flame afresh.

About the only lasting result is that the political agent has had a little experience in diplomacy and the wives

back in distant outposts get a new dress. A peace pact nearly always calls for a new dress but the men do the buying. No Waziri woman ever buys anything for herself. This may sound particularly villainous but the clansmen take it in the spirit of a Damon Runyon yegg; assassination is only to be condemned because it is apt to cause gossip round and about.

Incidentally, the proper way of showing a wife you're mad at her in the black hills is to cut her nose off, the time-honoured insult for bedroom infidelity. So many women in the homeland of homicide have their noses cut off that a wise tradesman in Bannu recently got the idea of importing artificial noses from an undertaking supply house in England and selling them to tribal warriors who had regretted their hasty amputation, for $12 each.

This suits everybody, but the Bannu trader hopes, wistfully, that British nose-makers will get around to making brown ones soon. He points out that a white nose on a brown face is sometimes unbecoming and while his experiments in nut juice dye are not bad, they do leave a rather streaky surface. He can always get various sizes though, and the speed with which new noses come out by air mail indicates to this trader that numerous English husbands cut their wives' noses off, because otherwise how would the undertaker always have such a large stock on hand?

Of course, the trader has never seen an Englishwoman or any other white woman. No one in Upper Waziristan has, because no white woman has been nearer than 80 miles to the place and no white man has ever walked the roads after dark, except perhaps the doctor who's life at all times is a combination of exciting experience and personal peril.

The experience includes that of the Bannu medico who was awakened by an alarm in the fort (the whole town is locked in at sundown) and went below to find there a

tearful tribesman mutely pleading that the professor save the life of his little girl.

Brutally whipped across the face by a rawhide thong in the hands of a rival tribesman, since put to death, the child was practically blind. For eighteen hours of steady plodding over the black hills, through the fortified area of neighbours who thirsted for his blood, the father had carried this child in the hope of having her eyesight saved.

The doctor, touched by the pitiful whimperings of the little girl, rolled up his sleeves, got to work and kept stubbornly at it until, a week later, he was convinced both eyes were on the mend. When the father started for home he stole and rode away on the doctor's horse. The exact part honour plays in this situation escapes me.

The peril comes from the slightest attempt to examine a woman. Nowhere else on earth is the purdah system of veiling the female and keeping her under lock and key so strict as in these remote hills. Practically all tribal women, because of neglect, suffer from what we call "women's complaints" sooner or later. The business of locking the matrons away in dusty dungeons also brings scourges of tuberculosis; yet if any doctor, acting entirely without pay, were to examine a woman's chest, he'd be killed within a week. As for attempting to cure more intimate diseases, he dare not even ask symptoms. The women simply come in, with armed males flanking them, and hope that the doctor will guess right. He usually does, but can only practise his gynæcology in a most roundabout way.

During my visit there was a jirga, or tribal powwow, in the village, a sort of overflow meeting from the peace palaver in the fort, and gaunt warriors from distant hills rode to town on mangy camels, parked their rifles in check-rooms, then got down to the business of trying to wheedle more protection money out of the British. It sounded very much like the annual convention of the

Amalgamated Racketeers of the Universe, but nothing came of it. Jirga day is always a busy time in the hospital so the doctors, two Indian and one English, were ready with instruments all sterilized. First came a boy of eight, his hand blown to pieces. He had been out tending his father's camels when he found a shiny metal ball which was good to roll about until it exploded. It was a home-made hand grenade such as the killers out back occasionally chuck into each other's houses. The boy had screamed in terror but was told by his father to shut up. When jirga time came along, several days off, he'd be taken to town where the doctor would make things right. The doctor cut the arm off and infuriated the father by saying the boy would have to stay in hospital two or three days. The father thought this a lamentable sign of weakness.

Here come six men all wounded. One has his lower jaw shot off and brings the piece of bone with him. He wants it put back in place and is very annoyed when the doctor says he can't mend it. Another has two shots in the abdomen. The holes leak a purplish fluid and smell bad. The doctor tells him he's going to die. He growls and staggers away, frankly annoyed. If die he must he'll die in his native hills with his boots on; not here in a smelly mud hut.

One man, shot in the back, groans pitifully. The stoics look on him with contempt. Then a man followed by two others carrying a dishevelled bundle on a cot comes in sheepishly. The thing on the bed is his wife. The man wants medicine for her, so the doctor gives him a bottle of medicine without daring to ask what is the matter with the woman. He says if the man wants to he can leave his wife in the woman's wing; only if she goes in she'll have to be examined, so of course she does not go in.

When babies come to these women they greet their

arrival in solitude and darkness. No one helps, not even the older women of the tribe. Occasionally a girl facing motherhood for the first time gets some advice from her own mother but no actual aid. She is expected to sneak into the watch tower and make her own delivery alone; then get back to her work in the fields. That's why there is so much female trouble afterwards, but here again she gets neither advice nor help until exhaustion fells her.

When anybody comes to this frontier healing station they are invariably in the last stages before collapse, yet the rate of cures is sky high in this hospital which more resembles a down-at-heels horse stable than a place of healing.

It happens pretty often, too, that when a man has a leg or an arm cut off he carries the amputated member away with him loosely wrapped in rags. Wants to make sure it's properly buried with the rest of him where it belongs, he says. Many a man comes in with his brothers to stand guard over his bed so that he won't be shot. When the brothers are hurried away by Pathan scouts who patrol the hospital, the victim always demands a room without windows with his bed facing the door. There are several of these rooms, more or less shot proof.

Another day, in the Bannu hospital, an old man with a stiff arm caused by a neglected bullet wound years before came in with his wounded son. The boy was a husky Pathan of eighteen who'd been shot in the knee while tending sheep. For four days and nights he'd been carried over the mountains toward salvation, but so weak had he grown from loss of blood after the first day that the father shot a sheep, skinned it and wrapped the splintered leg in the skin with the raw side toward the wound. When they eventually reached the hospital this sore was a hideous mess, made worse by the putrefying

sheepskin. The doctor said there was no hope for the boy, except immediate amputation.

"None whatever?" the father demanded.

"None."

"And if you cut off the leg will you promise a cure?"

"No, I'm sorry I can guarantee nothing. The wound is serious, the loss of blood has already been dangerous and I do not like the outlook."

"Then my boy must die," the father sighed. "If he dies now I can kill my enemy with a clear conscience before Allah, for my enemy has killed my boy. If he dies from your operation I will have to kill you, and not my true enemy." The boy was taken away again, but expired on the way to his people.

A good half of the patients in this hospital were from Afghanistan, the border of which was 15 miles away, but some came all the way from Kabul, the capital, which takes two weeks of hard plugging on a camel. One case I saw, a man with a bad rupture, came from Kabul six weeks earlier. Two men came together, father and son. From the hour the ailing father was dropped into his bed until the six weeks were up, the son never left his bedside. He never once stepped out of the room, not even to meet the usual demands of nature, which was a little trying on the other patients.

Doctors and dispensers were often amused by the unblushing but furtive request of vigorous-looking mountaineers for sexual stimulants. India proper is a sucker land for any aphrodisiac, but there the demand is artificially forced by high-powered advertising in the vernacular press. Waziristan has no press and no climatic ally to impotence, but if hospital records can be trusted black beards, flashing eyes and broad shoulders are not acceptable evidence of virility. Alcohol, strictly forbidden by the Koran, was the usual prescription and its effect, presumably, excellent.

As I mentioned before, all travel in Waziristan is from fort to fort, and the hop from Miramsha, headquarters of the scouts, to Razmak, headquarters of the army, is a longish journey which can only be attempted in daylight. You have to leave the scout headquarters while Pathans are running up the sunrise Union Jack, and be inside the wire at the other end before the mountain battery echoes the noonday gun across the black valleys.

To do this you drive through a river for 12 miles. Not across the river, but through it like a boat. Actually this deep-sea motoring is not necessary. You can backtrack on yourself six miles from scout headquarters, hit the caravan trail and climb 8,000 feet on a paved highway with more curves than Mae West. I chose to carry on by way of the boulders because it sounded adventurous and a red-faced recruiting officer, whose job was going out among tribesmen and offering them free guns and shells if they'd line up with the government instead of shooting each other, was very helpful about this.

"If you stick to the road," he assured me, "you won't be shot. If you wander off the road you will be."

There in a nutshell were the A.B.C.s of travel in tribal territory, but I was curious to know what would happen if they did drill me down. "The Wazirs respect the road," the recruiter went on. "We pay 2,000 of them to keep it open, but this is mere bribery to stop them from shooting travellers."

"But if I wander off the road and they shoot me, then what?"

"I guess you stay dead," he said laconically. "Now this line of boulders on each side, the ones marked white, are the road."

He pointed ahead to a large field strewn with small rocks. There were no people and no big rocks. Just a field with rocks.

"Now you go on for about twelve miles and you come to a fort and you think the road has ended, but you swing left into the river."

"The river?"

"Yes. There isn't much water in the river at this season, but be sure to swing into the river because if you go right on you will get into tribal no-man's-land and that is not a healthy place to go."

"And how do I get out of the river again?"

"Oh, that will be easy. You just follow the river until you can't follow it any more. It gets deep and there are rapids and big stones. Then you will find a way to swing up the left bank and you will be on the road again. Then you climb the mountain."

You see how easy it was. All I had to do was follow a lot of stones through a field, splash down a river and then climb a mountain. I didn't have to solve any crossword puzzles or even decide how long was a piece of string. On the first ten or twelve miles to the fort nothing happened except that we were continually behind a cloud of dust which seemed to eddy up in front of us like a smoke screen, so tribal snipers couldn't have got a decent aim at us anyhow.

Then in spite of all that had been told us we missed the dip into the river because it was a very deep dip and didn't seem to make sense at all. Straight ahead was the boulder-strewn road we'd been following and our mascot of swirling dust, and at the left was a path that looked impassable to anything but a tank. We thought we'd better push on and see if there was a drop into the river beyond the fort, but a lot of Pathan sentries came out pretty mad and said we'd have to go back.

The way they were chattering you'd have thought we had to go all the way back to India, so we decided to try the drop into the river and that worked out pretty well. We swung like trapeze artists down the brook,

now bumping into a deep hole and scaring the fishes who had been marooned there, and now lurching over the boulders.

Ahead of us was a caravan loaded with heavy timbers for some upland warrior to reinforce his private fort with, and when we caught up with it a big Wazir with a red face and a blond beard got off his camel and smilingly asked where we were going.

"Razmak," I said.

"That's nice. Me and my brother we will come."

He sang out some order to his herdsmen who gathered around the car, leaned their rifles against the fenders and wanted to know how many cigarettes we had. We said we had no cigarettes, so all the men but two made noises that sounded like Pushtu curses and got back on their camels. These two piled into the front with me, put their rifles between their knees and said they thought it would rain.

We splashed bumpety-bump from rock to rock in the river. On the banks of both sides there were graves. Acres of graves. The dead had all been buried at ground level and stones piled on top of them, but sometimes at night hungry jackals came and pushed the stones away and gnawed the bones of the dead. One place there were fluttering banners over a grave and on the shafts that held the banners there were skulls. The Wazirs made jokes about the skulls which had been washed from the graves by springtime freshets.

Then we met two men and two boys splashing their way on foot down the river and they decided they'd come riding with us too. There were five in the car already, not to mention enough gear to equip a camp, so I said nothing doing: they could not ride. The two prospective adult passengers thought this was just too bad and the boys would have to walk. They gave the boys their gold-encrusted rifles, opened the door, pushed my

servants out, and then piled in. My boys hung to the running board. The Wazirs saw my tins of salmon, sardines and beans and nonchalantly opened these up with big knives.

They didn't like the taste of sardines and tossed them away, but the beans delighted them. They juggled them on the ends of their giant knives with acrobatic skill, but I was fearful that when we lurched into the next trout pond somebody would cut his throat. Nobody did though, and after about two hours of navigation in low gear we came to a place where the river was joined by a tributary and went seething and boiling down the valley. I couldn't see any place to climb the bank, but all the tribesmen got out, put one look-out on top of the bank with all the rifles, and pushed us up with a rollicking sing-song.

My own boys were grey and silent. A frightened white man looks pretty much like the underside of a dead fish, but a native looks as if the fish had been left in the sun too long. As it turned out there was nothing to be worried about and our passengers treated us with utmost cheeriness.

Now we started to climb and twist and the higher we went the more tribesmen we passed. My gate crashers sang out some greeting and the men they were passing glowered at first, then broke into happy grins. Something as though we called a pal an old horse-thief or even worse things you can probably think up. If a stranger called him that he'd get pretty sore, but since it's a bosom pal he laughs it off.

But more and more of these men piled into the car. Without invitation, they just climbed in and sat on each other's laps or hung to the running-board. The rifles of the ones on the running-board clattered and banged against the doors and scraped a lot of paint off. Then a gun went through a window and everybody laughed.

At last, under the added weight—we now had fourteen passengers hanging to a five-passenger car on a mountain road—a tyre blew and all the tribesmen hopped out with their guns ready and couldn't be convinced that somebody hadn't taken a crack at us. We tried to explain what had happened, with the limp tyre as object lesson, but the explanation didn't go down so well.

A mile or two after we'd changed tyres our first hitchhiker, the camel man with the blond beard, sang out a command to halt and everybody piled off. Then each man came to me, prayed Allah that I would know a false friend, shook both my hands in a bone-cracking grip and marched off carrying the balance of my beans.

And so to the treeless and womanless, but by no means friendless, garrison outpost of Rasmak where for the first time on record English and Indian officers were eating the same food at the same table in the same mess at the same time . . . and sometimes it was beef.

Chapter VI

TRIBAL HOMELAND

IF you were to climb aboard a magic carpet some day and spy out the world's farthest acres in a rambling search for that country with the most lively contrasts you'd sooner or later glide over Waziristan, which starts being different by having neither laws nor government.

This homeland of Asia's fighting Pathans is not even a country at all. It's neither colony, protectorate nor province, but a sort of clansmen's reservation set in a frame of golden hills.

Somewhere to the west of India's Gurkha-guarded Kohat and Khyber passes, touching the edges of Afghanistan, Baluchistan and India proper, is this last stronghold of the tribes, a virile, untamed Asiatic highland where every man worthy of the name lives and breeds in his own family fortress, where the honour of his blood kin means more than health or wealth or life itself—more than anything on earth save vengeance—and where tribal law makes theft a greater crime than murder.

Razmak, fortified headquarters of this feud-torn land, is the only military base under British control where an entire brigade can march into action at ten minutes' notice with kit and supplies for a two weeks' campaign; the largest camp on earth never seen by a white woman.

I went there from Kashmir to write some news features and became a sort of unappointed and strictly amateur subaltern on what technicians call manœuvres.

For six days 6,000 troops had been wandering like a restless yellow reptile over Himalayan dunes. For six

days it had rained pitilessly. For six days Tommies and Gurkhas and Sikhs and Punjabis had cursed the weather in assorted tongues. For six days 3,000 pack mules had worn that look of contemptuous resignation with which they are born. Now the rain had stopped and a hot bluster sighed down the gullies; camp was just 12 miles off and the Rajputanas had the hills all picketed, so the danger of snipers was down to its routine normal. The men creaked steadily homeward; their gear tinkling cheerfully.

I sat on a tall black charger in an outfit that included tartan breeches, a Tyrolean hat complete with badger brush, and a ski-ing jacket, talking with a major who's been on that uproarious frontier for sixteen years and in that time had seen some of his own friends shot down and mutilated in a sadistic sex-crazed way by Mahsood and Afridi women. That started the conversational ball heading toward women. The major hadn't seen a white one in a year because he, from an Indian regiment, faced a two-year stretch in those strictly masculine uplands. Officers in British regiments, even though on Indian duty all their military lives, serve only one year in that treeless and womanless plateau.

Other officers joined us in the dry nullah where we sat. Talk drifted toward the other favourite line of verbal entertainment—horses. The remount depots sell a captain a charger for one hundred and sixty dollars; a major buying the same horse at the same place on the same day pays two hundred and forty dollars. Then if he's going to use it for army work—and there is no other use for it on the Waziri plateaux—the army will feed the steed but they won't give him water. The War Office has thought all this out. The horse needs water, of course, but that's up to the horse or the owner, not His Majesty's War Office.

Troops were still slogging by in the burning heat.

Troops carrying every type of fighting gear known to man. A few tribal women, barefooted and barelegged, trudged by carrying black-eyed babies. You look at these people living in the homeland in which they were born and raised and over which they still hold nominal control and you wonder why, by all that's just and holy, any outside nation should send a mighty army in to torment them and spy on them and burn their homes.

Britain doesn't attempt to administer the tribal belt of Waziristan; doesn't claim to own it. In its hills live courageous, hawk-eyed hillmen.

The hillmen endeavour to hold this homeland from invasion with native-made rifles; loosely-jointed home-packed shells. At the same time they must squeeze out a living from crusted mountain soil which sees no rain for seven months at a time. Opposed to them are 7,000 men whose only job is fighting or preparing to fight. Well-fed men, men with every killing device known to science. Men so armed that they can blow up tribal villages of mud and sticks without ever seeing them or rain bombs on scurrying enemies from the air and wipe them from the face of the earth. But why do it?

The army's answer is the triple P—peaceful penetration and preparedness. If these troops were withdrawn, intelligence officers insist, the entire frontier would be aflame. Down the plains would swoop lust- and loot-greedy fighting fools. Maniacs they are. Killers. Abductors who have already carried away thousands of women from lowland areas and ravished them. Men who stoop to the lowest and wildest forms of physical violence. Men who would torture you and me if they caught us and then, when death mercifully brought us relief, they would insult what was left of us in a vile and shocking way.

As this imperialistic indictment was being spat out we could see the fluttering red flag indicating the end of the column approaching down a distant glen. It had been

all day reaching us. We of the rear now pulled in our pickets and started the slow 12 miles towards a hot bath and a cold drink. The first six were pleasant, jingling miles filled with gay stories of manly conquests in empire outposts. It was great to be a swashbuckling and carefree Bengal Lancer, or some kind of lancer, out there where the bugles blow. But my borrowed black charger began to fret with impatience. Perhaps he felt the knees of inexperience in his sides, or began to recognize his surroundings. Maybe he was a general's horse or the fiery steed of a field marshal. Anyhow he wanted to be at the head of the parade, and once seized of that aggressive ambition neither hell nor high water could keep him back. Certainly I couldn't. He reared, sniffed a few times, then gathered his shanks in a long loping canter. Through that column he raced like blood through a vein.

Gurkhas dived for ditches while their sergeants roared. Punjabi snipers leaped for cover. Field kitchens were spilled, pack mules stampeded, gunners swore, officers laughed. A Red Cross truck cut loose from the column, came whining over the boulders to pick up what was left of me, then bogged to a stop in the current of a red river. The black charger took that stream in his stride. Eddies of maroon water sucked noisily around his belly but he just grunted a few times and splashed up the high bank at the other side. Here a transport major strung a load of sad little donkeys across the road to stop the horse, but he wasn't having any of such nonsense and flew onward.

Meanwhile I was trying to remember the advice cowboy and Indian books had given me about sticking aboard a runaway prancer. I could picture the dead and dying moaning behind me; I wondered if they could court-martial a civilian and shoot me at dawn. That seemed like a good idea just then. I closed my eyes,

pressed my knees and clung. From somewhere up front the horse's head came up and smacked me in the face. My lips bled. My backbone vibrated like a steel rod when you've got a trout on the end. I had a blurred picture, all out of focus, of more Gurkhas looming up ahead, looking back with panic and amazement and taking nose-dives into cactus and volcanic rock.

Then a towering Pathan, who must have weighed 250 or more, calmly leaned out of the saddle of his own snorting charger, which had arrived as silent and unseen as a germ, and pulled us to a stop. When I got off that horse I sat and sat for a long time thinking that from then on the Bengal Lancers could stay in the movies where they damn well belonged. As the column passed me for the second time that day I was target for a choice collection of raspberries and Bronx cheers.

You might have expected that when men six days out in the rain get back to the luxuries of a tin-roofed camp they'd spur straight on for the canteen and bath-house. Wrong. The place they did invade was the post office and you'd have laid even money most of them had just had a personal talk with Santa Claus when they toddled out with letters.

In the batch was one for me from Robert ("Fighting Bob") Flaherty who, hard on the triumph of his *Man of Aran*, was in Mysore shooting tiger and elephant scenes for a forthcoming jungle thriller.

Bob thought there'd be fun for me in the elephant lands if I could make it before the monsoon broke in its humid horror, so I started measuring road maps.

It was about 1,800 miles of heavy slugging to Mysore and the date May 25th; that meant we had to tackle the plains at their torrid worst but we had three weeks before the rains obliterated the roads of South India and swelled the rivers beyond hope of crossing.

I decided, as the adventurers say, to be off with the

dawn and told Baboo and Narayan, but an early start was against orders. Dawn throws its pink relief on the golden glens by six, in Waziristan, but gates to the fortress are never opened until seven and even then not to let strangers go their way, but to admit caravan drivers who slowly wind up the valley, bringing fruit and vegetables for the 7,000 men and fodder for the 4,500 work animals and 500 cows which make up this outpost. As the tribesmen approach the fort they lift their rifles high and sing out a greeting knowing full well that a false move will see them drilled with shot. They come to the outer barrier where scouts look them over, search them, compare fingerprints. Only those whose prints are on file as reputable traders can get in.

They pass into a stone hut like a killing pen for sheep and leave rifles, dirks and daggers behind. For these they get a brass check. Then they lead their camels along to the bazaar and sell off their produce for any money they can get, Indian, English or even Russian roubles.

Even after most of the morning caravans had checked in the road was still barred to my car; barred by the mangled body of a son of the House of Singh. This lonely looking Sikh—every Sikh is named Singh and belongs to the biggest family in all the history of the earth—had been driving an army truck to gather hay for the mules but failed to navigate one of the hundred-odd hairpin bends which trap the unwary as they glide down the ghat.

The ten-ton battle wagon took off from the cliff like a ski jumper, scattering six men in screaming confusion over the hills; two Sikhs and a Tommy died. Two weeks earlier another truck had got out of control at the same bend, killing two.

We were warned of the exact spot of these crashes, told to keep a rifle loaded and handy but out of sight, and not under any condition to stray from the road, which

was wide and smooth as a boulevard, except where battered up by boulders falling from the jagged crags through which we rolled. These, the hairpin bends and the occasionally homicidal interest of the local inhabitants, were our only troubles as the army bid us a soldiers' farewell and telephoned the Tochi scout posts that we were downbound to distant Mysore.

We never realized that one of the greatest and quickest disasters in modern times was to stop us from ever seeing either Flaherty or his performing pachyderms.

Chapter VII

BOMBAY OR BUST

EVEN at the beginning of our swing down the rusty ravines there was a minor tragedy. Twisting and winding their way up the hills came three camel caravans led by a vanguard of six armed men. Bold, picturesque warriors, these showed the respect with which they treasured their rifles by keeping them in plush cases hung about with silver coins. The camels carried onions, carrots and things like that for the soup pots at Razmak.

The wrinkled malik, or headman, in advance of the first caravan, took out his whacking bone and silver-mounted knife as we swung around a bend and held it high over his head in token of greeting. A friendly greeting, since he kept the knife in its sheath.

"O traveller, may you never grow tired," he salaamed, putting out his hand. I shook the hand which was rough and hard and almost buried mine.

"May you never be poor," he went on, looking the car over with calm insolence as his sixteen camels swung slowly past. On the back of each, besides the garden truck, were ten to twenty chickens or a goat. Neither goat nor chickens were tied to the camel. They just sat there holding their balance like the man on the flying trapeze, while winds from the high places ruffled their hair or feathers.

The drivers, all armed with rifles and dirks, were either up front or back of the camel train. Women in crimson and black robes with ropes of rupees around their necks, either led the camels or carried toddling tribal babies over the rough places.

The older women, hook-nosed creatures with seamy faces and cruel eyes, each shot me an up-and-down look of contempt, spat noisily on the ground, and pulled black curtains over their faces, but the younger girls with big red mouths and sharp half-lemon breasts kept staring as they went by. One carried a sick boy of about eight, and he, when he passed, repeated the tribal greeting: "O traveller, may you never grow tired."

Musically they jingled up the hill, but the second caravan was practically on their tail, so we had to wait for it to pass too. The chieftain at the van of this train had a spiky blond beard and a long rifle embossed with silver and inset with blue stones. The leather sling was all hung about with knobs of silver, but when I asked if each of these represented a dead man, he grinned and stalked on.

Straggling far behind was a woman so completely tuckered out that she could hardly walk. Under her greasy robe was a wee mite of a babe which had been born while the caravan pushed toward the fort. Nobody had bothered to wait and help the woman, and now, with agony in her face, she was catching up as best she could.

The third family parade was only two camels, but these were young, road-shy and terrified of the car. One man owned both. He with all his strength tried to hold the leader to let us pass, while his two wives clung silently to the other. It was kicking up a fuss, too, but seemed more interested in copying the terror of the first camel than in worrying about us.

I kept the car still on that mountain shelf and told the wallah to lead his mangy brutes up on the inside so they wouldn't go plunging down the cliff, but he didn't understand me and kept tugging to force them up on the outside of the mountain, where one frantic jump would spill them to death 1,000 feet below.

These panicky beasts were carrying bulky slabs of

timber for some upland chieftain to build a bigger sniping tower over his home, and there was the nasty probability that when they started going past the car one or the other would swing sideways and crack the timbers through the windows.

"Bring 'em on the inside," I yelled in English, but that did no good and my boys hardly knew any Pushtu, which these fellows spoke, so couldn't interpret. In time the beasts seemed quiet enough for me to make a move, so I cut off the brake and started coasting past them.

The nearer and younger beast heard me coming, looked up, grunted and with one mighty jerk was free from the worried owner. Over the bank he went in a shadowy somersault, while the women, now screaming in terror, let go of their beast, which happily stood still.

We could hear the first camel bumping his way down the cliff, his load of timber scraping slabs of black shale from the side, but didn't wait to hear much. I was afraid the enraged owner would unleash a shot at our roof as we took the bend down below. He didn't though, or if he did it was a miss.

It took us six minutes of twisting and winding to reach the spot where the camel lay, still breathing. The sporting thing to do now was get out and shoot him, but that would have meant a volley from aloft, so we streaked for safety with a good deal of self-contempt for having killed the man's most valuable asset.

At the place where the big truck had gone down the bank, a wrecking car from the tank corps was gathering up the pieces, while the khassadars, or patrols, of whom more than 2,000 are paid $10 a month each to keep that 80 miles of road free of snipers, were gathered around in happy interest. The body of the second Sikh lay under a brown canvas and from time to time neighbourhood clansmen would uncover him and look at the jagged holes through his face in ghoulish fascination. Then they

would walk away and come back for another look, as if drawn to the spot by magnetism.

We rolled on down the hairpins, passed dozens of caravans upbound, many with calves or lambs perched on the camels, and on the Mirali Plateau reached the camp of the wives.

This collection of tents and huts sits in the midst of an upland desert. A dry oven of a place, marking the farthest tribal outpost to which women may go. Here, sometimes for months on end, live the wives of the garrison at Razmak. Many are white women, enduring summer heat or winter winds, boredom and the complete absence of home comforts, just to be near their husbands, whom they might see, if the colonel is generous with leave passes, once in ten days. Many, too, are Indians, and this gives the lie to those writers who say the Indian woman has no lasting love for her man.

If you were to sit down and tax your memory, your imagination or even your dreams for the most God-forsaken waste of sand and rock you ever conjured up, you could not create a more evil spot than this. Not a tree nor a blade of grass can be seen in any direction. There is neither shop nor rest-house nor restaurant. There is no post office, nor bank nor oasis, nothing but dust and stone and heat.

But this is the closest women can get to their loved ones back of the barbs 80 miles away, and there, driven on by whatever inner urge it is that drives women toward men and men toward women, they come and camp and talk about their husbands. There is plenty of red meat in that gusty wasteland for the novelist be he intrigued by romance or conquest or by the triumph of love over geography.

Now we sped along smooth, dry roads to Bannu, the walled city at the gateway to India proper. Bannu would have been a good spot for lunch, but we were racing the

monsoon, so zoomed along into tribal territory once more and soon came on further tragedy. A whole family, who had been peacefully harvesting their meagre and hard-earned wheat crop, had been wiped out the night before. Nobody knew how many were dead, but no life stirred about their tents.

Narayan, who got the horrible details from excited people on the roadside, was convinced that he could see gory corpses as the car rolled slowly by, but his imagination was a productive one at its feeblest. All I could see from the road were silent tents in a hollow of the hill and charred remains of what had been the grain harvest.

Onlookers talked excitedly of twenty or thirty people, including babes in arms, being wiped out and their heads carried off in savage triumph, but, they assured me, the assassins still lurked in the high spots, ready to shoot down anyone who ventured near to collect the bodies, so only a few nervous vultures hovered in the air.

It perhaps seems incredible to you that wholesale murders of this kind can take place within sight of a smooth, paved road in a land where a half-million men are under arms to prevent just such assassinations, but you'd expect even worse if you once saw the savage gleam in the eyes of these highland warriors who have no more respect for life—their own or anyone else's—than you have for an empty can.

Leaving that homicide unprobed, we ran into the gorge of the painted stones; sun-baked inferno of red, blue and coal-black rocks split here and there by rivers so white you'd swear they were made of snow or paint. Through this territory the only living thing we saw were quick brown lizards and the inevitable plodding camel caravans. The boys were so curious of the pure white coating over the streams—probably salt or some alkaline mineral—that they insisted on getting out for a look, but the warning, "Keep to the road; it is your only place of

collapsed crying for help, while 8-cents-a-day labourers jeered at him. This man, not only an untouchable, but a blind and helpless untouchable, was less than a worm beneath the feet of these road coolies. Nobody would help him, nobody would try to prevent his death beneath the plodding feet of white bulls. My own boys could not be forced to lend a hand to the poor fellow, so I got out and straightened him around.

We ran into the sewerlike bazaar of Lahore after four hours in a temperature of 109 and my caravan cut-ups vanished into the catacombs of stink and disease on secret mischief. When they got back, they gleefully handed me a palm leaf filled with gooey strawberries, which rank absolute tops in the foods tabooed to white men in the Asiatic tropics. The boys were a bit crestfallen when I turned them down, but soon hurried away to get their money back. Meantime, the car was surrounded by a repulsive but customary set of beggars, some of whom were professionals of skill and affluence.

Although many a sane man delights in the place, Lahore has always curdled my blood and made me frightened of India. These beggars with faces and arms eaten away with leprosy are part of the everyday show. So is the ever-present smell of human flesh burning in the ghats. The place has its beauties but it gives me the creeps. I was glad to leave it behind.

Now the country changed. There were no more hills, but occasional jungles. Parrots screeched at us from trees, and grey doves, too slow for a speeding car, were being bashed by windshield and radiator with unpleasant regularity. Once a parrot was swept into the car and out again. At this time Baboo, the Hindu, was driving, and it amused me to see how he braked down and sounded the horn as we came near monkeys. Even though a motorist drives a mile a minute for year after year, his chances of running down an Indian monkey are

about the same as the floating chances of a rock, but Baboo, to whom the monkey is more sacred than his own life, took no chances. The thicker the monkeys became the slower he drove, so I took over the wheel and gave him the jitters as I skimmed by small tawny apes.

About four we ran into Ambala where the home-towners were shrieking in glee because a neighbouring maharajah had formally announced himself engaged to marry and had paid $125,000 cash for his bride-to-be.

He was Rejendra Prakash Bahadur, ruler of Sirmoor, a state neither you nor I ever heard of before, and he was about to slide off the deep end with the sister of the Maharajah of Nagod, who certainly seemed to be a high-priced bride. This may be a good time to remind you that at no time in all his life does the average Indian own 40 cents. Never!

Yet the bridegroom will not only pass on to his tax-payers this $125,000 betrothal fee but another $125,000 for the gifts, feasting and general buzz-buzz of the wedding itself. If John Taxpayer refuses to contribute he'll be flogged while his possessions are confiscated; if he can't pay he'll be put in the chain gang.

Ambala, however, was the gateway to excitement for me as well as the rajah's yes-men because of a cobra. I went to the station for a long drink and a refill of my water jug when a rat started entertaining. He was an amusing Mickey Mouse sort of rat who chased a paper ball all over the station. Nobody minded this until he climbed on a sideboard and started eating mangoes. At this, a gaunt keeper with the word "butler" written across his nightshirt, grew vocally indignant and started after the rat with a broom. He finally got him into a corner in the kitchen when I heard a shriek and looked up in time to see the butler come racing toward me with a cobra in rather hesitant pursuit. Apparently the rat had dashed into the snake's hideout and the snake pounced on him,

only to have this welcome morsel knocked from his jaws by the butler. Now the snake was chasing the butler while the dishwasher and cook came hopefully behind. As the snake hit the smooth concrete floor of the dining-room he started skidding and lost headway.

At this the cook opened a bombardment with beer bottles, and the cobra was soon cut and bleeding but by no means disabled. He made for the door to the platform where people waiting for the train saw him and started yelling, more in interest than anxiety and making no effort to get out of his way. One woman with a babe seemed transfixed in the snake's path, so I swerved him aside by bouncing a beer bottle in front of him. Later the butler gave me a bill for the broken bottle. Meantime, however, the snake was coiled up and lashing about and the stationmaster came up and polished him off with the handle of a brakeman's flag.

When I got back to the car my boys were nervously waiting. "Sahib," the driver said formally, "in Rajputana you shot for us one buck every day and we had meat to eat."

After saying this he ran out of words.

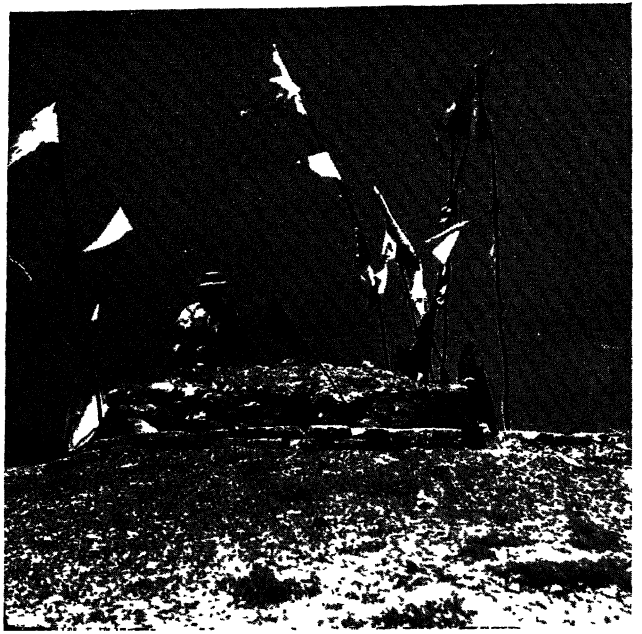
"Well, go on," I primed.

"It has now been five weeks and we have had no meat . . ." He stopped again and then handed me my rifle. Between Ambala and Delhi there is loose, scrubby jungle. I seemed to have my orders, but mile after mile ticked away on the speedometer with no deer in sight.

There were monkeys and parrots and an occasional beast called a nilgai, or blue bull, a stupid, tasteless sort of animal. Then at the same moment all three of us spotted a beautiful black buck furiously charging a fallen tree. So far as we could make out, there was nothing else near; just this one buck, his long, bayonet-like antlers assaulting the tree and ripping the thing to pieces. He was about 400 yards off, but there was good cover

Kashmir—two of our coolies on the road to Tibet

The Rev E C Tyndall-Biscoe's school at Srinagar, Kashmir



An Afghan raider's grave, Upper Waziristan, with banners and offerings of food (in small bits of pottery) on top of the grave

Caravans going through the Khyber Pass

between him and the road, so I went after him, pretty confident of a venison dinner.

I got within 200 yards with a good clear view, and just as this fellow made another dash I let fly. I'd seldom felt more confident of a shot in my life, but he didn't go down. Then, as if to ease this disappointment, three other bucks came from the far side and stood looking at me. I knocked one of these down and went to get him, but found two. The big fellow who had been charging the fallen branches had dropped among them. I was sorry now I had the two animals, because it seemed a waste, but the boys were exultant. Didn't one of them live in Delhi? Wasn't he going home now in triumph to show his wife and daughters what a mighty sahib he worked for?

We had a venison dinner by way of celebrating our victory over Asia's fastest train that night and hit out for Agra before sun-up.

Good luck and good roads both deserted us there and the thermometer raced to 117 in the shade and left sixty corpses for the burning ghats. Only fools and Britishers, they say, will risk such weather, so the boys pleaded that we wait, but I was determined now to reach Bombay on our fifth day and probably would have made it if the tyres had held out. Unluckily one blew with a loud pop just outside Agra and one perished with a sick burp a few miles farther down. This happened beside a mango orchard where several families, surrounded by babies, gramophones and bottles of muddy-looking water were holding picnics. The picnickers not only entertained us with music, but took delight in fixing the tyre.

The trees were so thick with foliage that they provided solid, black shade. This would have been just swell, but they also provided cool daytime retreats for a billion mosquitoes. I swear there really were a billion, so we had to hike out of there and were soon stalled again when

the luggage carrier gave away, spreading my gear all down the dusty road.

In Kashmir the luggage carrier had gone smash when a boulder fell on it with a bump, but there seemed no reason for it to go now. But gone it had and this meant that everything in the way of beds, bundles and boxes, including part of a deer, which had gone beyond the rigor mortis stage, had to be piled into the seats, and we had to curl up like eels to wedge ourselves in for the 60-mile trek to the nearest garage.

In case you wonder what a man thinks about when the thermometer is above 115 in the shade, and there is no shade, I tell you he thinks of water and of nothing in all the world but water. He thinks of cool pools and lazy lagoons. He remembers when he learned to swim. He pictures crystal-clear drops trickling like diamonds out of a tap, but he knows there isn't a tap of any kind or description for a hundred miles of parched country. A country which must have inspired whoever created in imagination that inferno we think of as hell.

But the tyres held out and we rolled in on Gwalior, the only place in the world where they hold elephant races. But there were none that day. Nothing happened that day because nobody was fool enough to stir. There was a good hotel in Gwalior, but I only stopped long enough for food and a new tyre with the prayer that it would last 1,500 miles, and pushed on.

The country now became blood-red as far as man could see in any direction, including up. Suffocating clouds of red dust blew in from the plains. We, the car and every stunted tree within sight were plastered with this red powder. It made us cough and sneeze and choke. A few times I really thought I'd suffocate, but soon we had to snap out of thoughts about ourselves when we found a man in the road covered with blackening blood. He was a young Mahratti and in the ditch beside him

was a bicycle loaded with spare parts and scanty provisions.

As I got out to look at him, he smiled at me with eyes which didn't seem to see. He was looking far away with glazed orbs like the eyes of those fakirs you see in Benares by the Ganges who have watched the sun travel its daily westward course for so many years that their eyes have long since burned out.

"They robbed me," the youth said in soft, cultured English.

"Who robbed you?"

"The dacoits. The Gwalior police told me I'd be robbed in this jungle. Please, sir, they have hurt me. They have hurt me very much. I think I shall die."

"Nonsense, you're all right. Wash your face off with this cold water, and climb in here—we're going to Shivpuri. There is a hospital in Shivpuri."

He washed with the last of my drinking water and we put his bicycle on the roof. Then we helped the lad in beside me, and his wounds, mostly on the nose and temple, started to spurt again, and he went all out with a sort of whoosh. It sounded as though the air had all gone out of him with a leap.

He was bleeding so much that I got definitely worried, so the boys stopped in a village, bought and killed a chicken, then cut the thing in half and plastered its skin, feathers and meat over the boy's temple. Then they bound chicken and head up with his own turban and we bumped sickeningly toward Shivpuri, where we got the chap in hospital. He hadn't regained consciousness but had started to talk quietly in his delirium. I hope he got all right again.

There was a hotel in Shivpuri, so we went there, and soon afterwards another car pulled up and I heard two girls, apparently Americans, chattering like myna birds to each other. Apparently they didn't know there was

anybody else within hearing distance, because the things they uncorked were enough to make a Marseilles madame blush a faint pink.

I fell asleep, with the girls telling each other smoke-house stories, and woke about midnight. They were still going full blast. In the morning we pushed off for Indore at five-thirty, and I looked around to see who these nocturnal entertainers were, but they had moved north a half-hour earlier.

We'd only been on the road a half-hour when smash went the luggage carrier again. I couldn't understand this carrier going twice in two days because all we carried was three trunks, three beds, a folding bathtub and the typewriter. A mere nothing for India. I got out to watch the boys unhappily pick up the shattered remains of caravan equipment when I found a granite monkey staring at me. I hadn't seen this before, and when I went to pick it up couldn't budge the thing. It must have weighed 200 pounds. The boys looked a bit sheepish but didn't say a word.

"What's this thing?" I asked.

"God, master."

"God? Are you crazy?"

"No, master, this be God. I pick him up at temple in Waziristan. Plenty bad man take away Hindu god from Hindu country. Take him to Waziristan which is Moslem country. I go one time and bring God back to Hindu country."

"But when did you go, at night?"

"Yes, master."

"But you couldn't! The whole camp is patrolled by two thousand soldiers, there is barbed wire . . . machine-guns . . . searchlights."

"My god looked after me," the Hindu said with a fatalistic shrug.

That was okay for him but his god, apparently, wasn't

up to the task of creating a bolt that would support a half-ton of gear. Anyhow, we loaded the granite monkey into the machine and pushed on to a place called Khalgat, where I was so fagged out by heat and the suffocating dust that I couldn't eat. I slept in a farmer's field and was awakened at two by a ghost-like apparition who turned out to have casually come for the sole purpose of cutting my throat while I slept. I realize that after reporting so many adventures in this car ride, I'm testing your credulity too much to spring an attempted murder on you now.

All I'll bore you with is the report that I was asleep. A man woke me. He looked like a headless ghost in the dark because he wore white clothes, but his face and hands were very black. It was blowing a gale almost, and I hardly heard what the man was chattering, but from time to time I caught the word American.

I turned a torch on the fellow. He was a scarecrow of a man of thirty or so with a black beard. I didn't realize it was so late and thought he was asking for a job. My own boys were sleeping about 50 yards away and I shouted at them through the gale to get up and take this fellow away, but couldn't wake them. The man stood chattering like a parrot. Then he came at me with a knife. I saw something white in his hand but didn't know it was a knife. I thought it was the usual book of recommendations the average job-seeker lugs around with him.

I told the man to take that junk away, then I snuggled a sheet up around my head and forgot all about the guy. But from somewhere a dog, a mangy-looking creature, which had been sleeping beside the lamp which was at the foot of my cot, sprang for the fellow and the knife clattered out of his hand. When I picked it up I really did get a scare, because it was a pretty businesslike-looking knife.

Meantime the fellow had fled but in the morning he reappeared and turned out to be a half-wit fanatic who said he had come to dispose of the local engineer who wouldn't give him a job. By now it was our fifth day out and we aimed to make Bombay or bust, but oddly enough the nearer you get to any big Indian city the worse the roads.

So we bust. With only 321 miles to go, we pushed off at seven but midnight caught us with 24 miles still undriven that day and I was too tired to make it.

Nothing much happened but dust and bulls, and toll gates. The roads as we neared Bombay grew deeper and deeper in dust, and we were hourly stopped by stupid and arrogant men demanding tolls. They put no gate across the road, wave no flag, present no order from anyone living or dead to authorize tax-collection. They just draw a cart or a boulder or a tree trunk across the path and demand two bits. Okay, you pay two bits. But the poor bewildered bullock driver ahead, some farmer who is trying to get a cartload of water-melons to town before they go bad on him—he's asked a nickel. He argues. He whines. He pleads. His bullocks lie down and block the road. There is no moving in any direction. You are stopped in swirling fogs of dust and there you remain for hour after hour.

Sundown found us still 96 miles from Bombay and at the instant of darkness the gates over all railway crossings were locked against us. Gates are always locked ten minutes ahead of train time, but in the north, if you are delayed longer than that, you get a complaint book to sign if you think that is going to do any good. It doesn't except to keep the gatekeeper a bit more alert.

But in the midlands of Hindustan when the keeper wants to sleep, he locks his gates against you and curls up when the sun goes down, and there is no complaint book. Altogether, we wasted over three hours pleading and

praying with gatekeepers to open up and let us through.

The final straw, so far as we were concerned, was at a place called Asangaon, where shunting was in progress. When a train is shunting near a level crossing, the gate is locked up and the key given to the engineer. This engineer, having blocked all traffic a half-hour, eventually chuffed down to Bombay with the key still in his pocket. And this on the main highway connecting the capital with the second city of the second biggest country in all the world!

Hours later we had progressed four miles and were at Thana, off the main road altogether. We parked there the balance of the night and rolled into Bombay three hours after dawn on the sixth morning.

It was no world record, of course, but just the same, it was a fairish attempt at getting places, and I was a bit limp, what with one thing and another.

I picked up my mail, carried it to a Times Square type coffee-shop and ate the first decent breakfast in a week. Later in the day, Baboo pleaded with me to let him have the car so he could scoot toward Poona and see his family. For an Indian servant to make such a request was unheard of but I liked this cheery aide of the road and in some respects his plea was reasonable so I let him go with strict orders to be back in four hours. He wasn't. Six, eight, ten hours slid by. Night came and Baboo turned up blissfully pie-eyed.

"What's wrong with you?" I demanded. "Tight?"

"Yes, sir, very tight."

"So you let me down. After letting you bring your stone god back from the mountains and paying you in advance and . . ."

"Yes, sir, I am tight, but I don't drive. I know I'm tight so I stay tight. But I don't drive. I know."

"If you didn't drive the car when tight how did you get here?"

He lurched amiably toward the car and came back with a tall Sikh resplendent in pale blue uniform and yellow turban . . . the chauffeur of the rajah.

"My brother," he grinned. If this Poona Hindu was brother to a Patiala Sikh, I was Shirley Temple. I let all that go and waved the pair away.

The driver, however, was not finished yet. "Master," he went on, "I need now twenty-seven rupees."

"But I just paid you off . . . how can you need twenty-seven rupees?"

He spread his jaws in a wide grin. A tooth, a tooth that had been sound and hard and white was missing.

"I want it one gold tooth," he explained. "I am want it one gold tooth for years and now I can get one for twenty-seven rupees and you have the rupees and, yes, I am still tight."

Chapter VIII

PLAGUE

BOMBAY in these days has gone streamlined, air-conditioned and modernistic. To be sure, Parsees still feed their dead to vultures atop the fashionable Malabar Hill every afternoon, and Hindus burn corpses day and night on the busy Queen's Road, but gawdy picture palaces and tea-rooms are getting a big play by home-towners and tourists alike, while lavish apartment houses, equal to Park Avenue, are springing up like mushrooms, pent-houses and all.

I toyed with breakfast, mail and a morning paper in one of the crimson and chromium bun-shops and read that Colonel Singh Sokhey, India's famed bacteriologist and director of the Haffkine Institute, was about to open a Bombay snake farm similar to the Pasteur cobra and Krait menagerie in Bangkok.

When it comes to snakes, rats and fleas, the terrible trio that cause plague, death and desolation throughout all Hindustan, few living humans know more about their control than Sokhey. So I went to see the colonel, whom I'd met years before in Canada.

Until a year or so ago no serum brewed for the cure of cobra bite would even ease the pain of a man dying from the knifelike stab of the krait or viper. Sokhey worked out a life-saver that would offset stings of viper and cobra combined, and now the institute is working on a liquid which, when injected, will save a man whether he's been dropped by cobra, Russell viper, krait or saw-scaled viper, enemies he can seldom identify himself. If such a serum is perfected the one remaining difficulty will

be to preserve it from disintegration in jungle climate. This, if successful, will leave only that slinking king of the reptile world, the hamadryad or king cobra, as an unconquerable and deadly adversary.

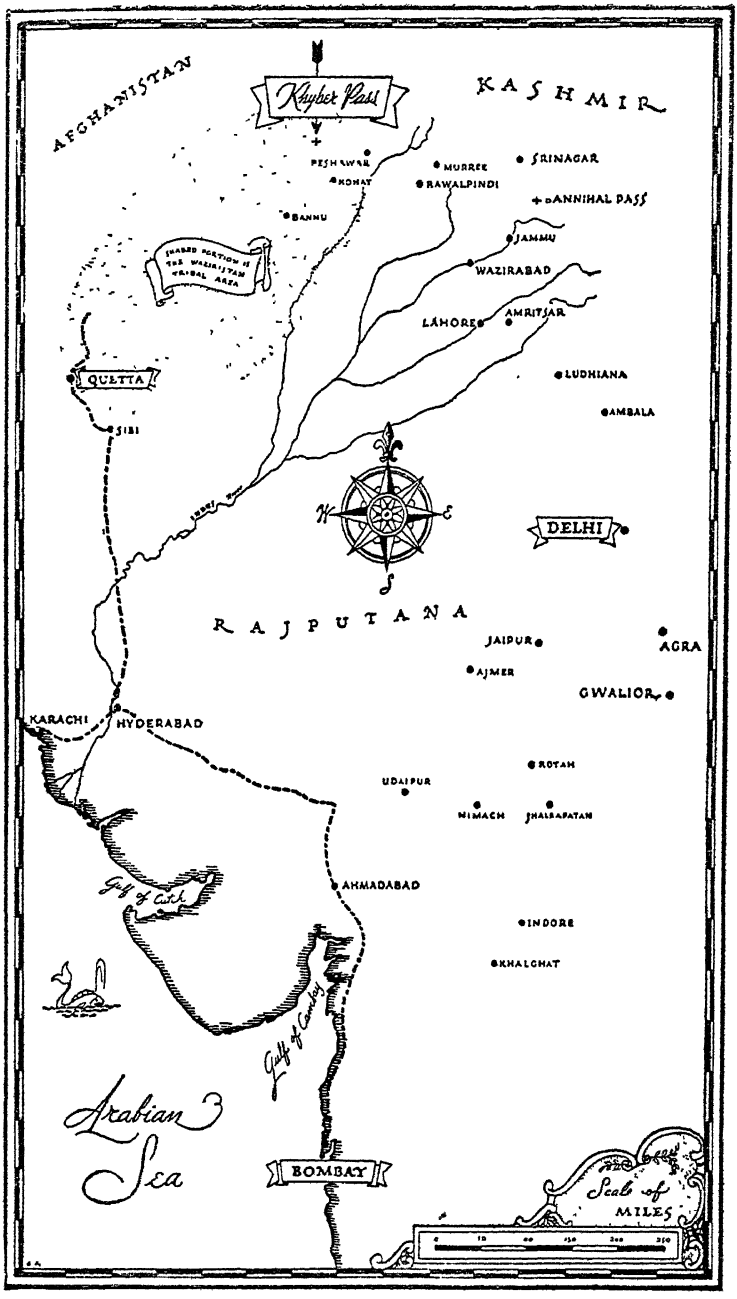
"And cancer?" I asked this soft-spoken colonel of the medical corps. "They tell me you have a possible cancer cure in cobra venom and that so far it has been most successful."

"No." The colonel smiled. "That's just one more of the cancer myths. We did at one time enlist presidency agencies to gather large quantities of venom. This was at the request of the French government, but we dropped it as useless. Cobra venom is useful only in deadening the pain of cancer; worthless as a cure. The cobra, you know, is a rather overrated bully. He's a deadly assassin at heart, of course, but his aim is bad and he can hit from only one position. The Russell viper is far more active and accurate. He's the serpent to watch."

Our conversation was soon interrupted by the shrill shriek of caged monkeys. They had malaria and the scientists were trying to cure them in new ways. It was pitiful to see them shivering and moaning with the outdoor temperature standing at 90. Malaria still kills more people in India than all other causes combined. The deadly king of the jungle is the mosquito, not the man-eating tiger or the rogue elephant.

I drifted away from the colonel, watched M. V. Kamat, an assistant, extract poison by squeezing deadly cobras like so many lemons, and then went down into the plague headquarters. The brewing of anti-plague cultures is the real job of the institute. They make and give away two million plague inoculations a year.

Somehow I strayed into the receiving room where snakes, in iron boxes, are bought daily at fifty cents each. Two men, father and son, were looping them out of boxes as if they were so many ropes of sausages. The cobras


AFGHANISTAN
Khyber Pass
KASHMIR
PESHAWAR
KOHAT
MURREE
RAWALPINDI
SRINAGAR
BANNU
JAMMU
WAZIRABAD
LAHORE
AMRITSAR
QUETTA
LUDHIANA
AMBALA
SIBI
DELHI
RAJPUTANA
JAIPUR
AGRA
AJMER
GWALIOR
KARACHI
HYDERABAD
ROTAH
UDAIPUR
NIMACH
JHALRAPATAN
AHMADABAD
INDORE
KHALGHAT
BOMBAY
Arabian Sea
Gulf of Cutch
Gulf of Cambay
Scale of MILES

silently watched us all and frequently pounced with all the fury of mad muscles and savage instincts. The vipers hissed like mid-winter steam valves. One got away and, in the dark room, I thought they'd never find him, but they did without trouble or the use of a mongoose.

The elder snake handler—Bombay's official charmer—was full of spectacular snake stories. Once, he said, a white man came there with a box full of cobras with which he hoped to demonstrate a new and simple cure for venomous bites and to do it in a sensational way. He had a salve, he said, which would immediately ease all pain and kill the poison from any snake bite within an hour.

"Watch!" he shouted. "Watch what I do. Watch carefully!"

He took off his shoes and socks, rolled up his pants and jumped in among the snakes, who lashed about in frenzied consternation. He kicked them, slapped their spectacled hoods, stepped on them, and they, of course, bit until blood and sticky, whitish poison ran down the demonstrator's leg. Then the man climbed out and counted his wounds. Seventeen bites, all of them commencing to swell. To each he applied a little salve and rubbed it in.

"There we are—a sure cure—nothing will happen to me," he exulted. But something did happen. The man weakened. His mind wandered and he collapsed. With great power of will he pulled himself around and said: "I must have missed one. I missed a bite. You see if I didn't. When I die look me over. See if I didn't miss a hole."

When he died they examined him closely and sure enough there was one pin-sized gash untreated by the salve. Perhaps that salve is a wonderful and certain cure. Nobody knows. It's at the institute with dozens of other sure things that failed but nobody will dare to use them.

Then there was the case of a Bombay charmer, who,

like hundreds of his kind, prowls the streets with a mongoose on a string and a few cobras in a basket seeking to entertain anybody who'll slip him two bits. At nights he generally beds down on the pavement with his snake basket as a pillow.

One night his snakes, dislodged by the owner's restless tossing, broke loose, turned on the handler, and stung him several times in the neck. He screamed in terrified pain and other homeless waifs sleeping in the stone arcades carried him the several miles to the institute for treatment. He was dead on arrival, which upsets the theory that snakes in the hands of charmers are fang-drawn or otherwise impotent from a poisoning point of view. Few snakes are ever fang-drawn because canker sores forming in the mouth invariably kill them if this kind of operation is performed. Ask about this next time you're in a circus or a zoo.

I listened to these stories with rapt attention, then remembered I had a further date with Colonel Sokhey and hurried away. But I opened the wrong door. And the wrong door I opened was the door into the room of the plague germs.

It slid quietly and smoothly shut behind me. I heard it click like a heavily insulated refrigerator door. I was in a room with a billion germs of a deadly disease. To move around in search of a light meant that I might knock over a bottle—then I'd be either an experimental guinea-pig or a corpse and neither one smells good, so I stood still and waited. Soon my eyes got used to the dark and I could make out the long lines of pot-bellied bottles, for all the world like the wine vaults for Devil's Island convicts. I made out an electric light cord, too, pulled it and after a few fumbles at the door, broke loose, a little wide-eyed, and breathed a lot of long, clean breaths.

The colonel had pushed on somewhere for lunch so I decided to look up Bombay's Barnum, the Painkiller

Sahib. Allan Warren was a young medicine drummer from my part of the world who had about as much use for dignity as you'd have for a Zeppelin, and, since his job was selling the twin drugstore delights of the Indian —painkiller and powders—he decided to sell 'em with music and a smile.

A truck rigged up with the loudest and catchiest radio gadgets outside a carnival show was part of his stock-in-trade. Nightly he trundled this concentration of canned entertainment and bright lights around to such gathering-spots as the Chowpatti sands, where Gandhi first made his illegal salt, and there put on a whirlwind show ending with a high-pressure spiel about painkiller which made the rupees fairly stream in. My one terror was that by day he might want to do a spot of rehearsing with me as audience but I was spared this.

After a large hello the Painkiller Sahib suggested we go swimming, but first he had a little painkilling to do. Would I wait? I waited and something rare in India happened. A newsboy went racing up the street bellowing an extra. Over the front page streamed the heading:

'QUAKE SHAKES QUETTA
FEAR THOUSAND DEAD
300 EUROPEANS PERISH

That was bad news in two ways: 1,000 dead is a calamity in almost any country but in India where somebody dies every five minutes of the day and night from snakebite alone it would be only a one-day sensation. Worse from a selfish point of view was the fact that I'd been within a day's motoring of the stricken city when I started from Razmak and now, as a reporter, I'd probably have to pull on my seven-league boots and hot-foot it toward disaster rather than enjoy a Mysore elephant hunt with Fighting Bob Flaherty.

These thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of a sepoy with a large sign on his chest and a torn envelope in his hands. He handed me this in silence.

Addressed to Thomas Cook and Sons, Delhi, it read:

Do everything possible locate Gordon Sinclair our reporter somewhere in Khyber area advise him proceed Quetta, cable address, cover earthquake. Toronto Star.

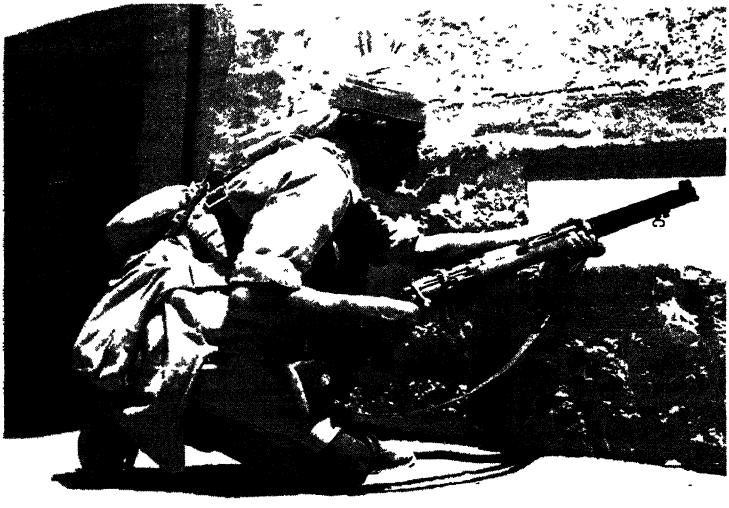
How many people had opened that envelope before me I'll never know but by some mesmerism or magic it had reached me within ten minutes of hearing about the quake even though Cook's had been asked to scout the North of India for me and I was in the coastal midlands a thousand miles off.

It was Saturday afternoon; banks were closed and would be closed until Tuesday, but three friends came through with enough money for me to reach the stricken city from where fresh trickles of news were gradually raising the casualty list from 1,000 to 10,000 to 50,000 and eventually 100,000. By the time I'd arranged for a plane to meet me at Ahmedabad and had caught the Kathiawar Mail northward the known dead were 30,000 and already vultures were streaming in to devour corpses bloating in the sun.

Normally Europeans travelling first class in India do not share coaches with Indians. Never before had it happened to me that I shared a compartment with a woman. But as we rattled away from the Central Station on this new and ghoulish adventure I shared a compartment with five women; five Indian women who, it turned out, had never made a journey before in their lives and thought they would be much safer in the company of a white man.

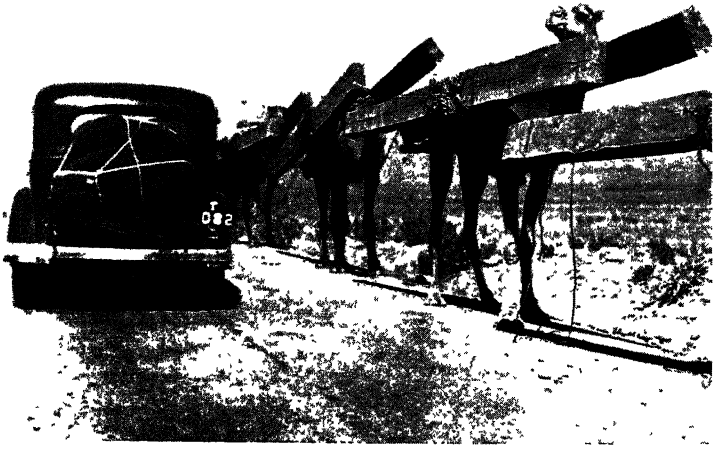
Indian trains, as you probably know, have no corridors. The compartment is the full width of the car

Captured Afghan and Pathan raiders en route for prison



A Tochi scout watches clansmen gather for a peace palaver with the British Political Agent at Miramsha, Waziristan

Miramsha, Waziristan—a tribal peace palaver British political agents in the centre



Waziristan and Afghanistan—new supplies for family forts These timbers are sometimes carried hundreds of miles

and once the rattler is under way there is no way of stopping it or getting out. The instant we started these five women became terrified of me and the train. They huddled in a corner and chattered and when this brought no response they attempted bribing me into good humour by gifts of food. I pulled a blanket over my head and went to sleep. The howls of station food-vendors occasionally wakened me in the night, and each time I moved the women shone a torch in my eyes to watch every move I made.

Next morning what seemed like half the population of Ahmedabad was down to meet the Mail and there were cheers and whoops of delight for these startled fellow passengers who turned out to be high shots of very great importance indeed . . . all I got were poisonous looks and word that the plane I had chartered after much palaver from Bombay had gone without me.

Only thing left to do was catch the narrow-gauge rattler for Karachi, twenty-four hours away, and hope for the improbable salvation of some other plane waiting for me at some other station. That didn't happen, but a minor earthquake did. I was having dinner. The quake overturned tables and broke dishes. Frantic people ran pell-mell into the desert when we stopped, but no cars left the track. We stopped only ten minutes, then pushed on through the desert. That ride was torture because I couldn't rest. Heat and the churning of ideas in my head kept me awake. At last we touched Hyderabad and there was a three-seater aeroplane chartered by a chap called C. S. Chandra. He offered to take me in but I had to chuck all my gear behind. Even my camera. There was a horrible moaning wind sweeping down the desert. The temperature was 120 in the shade, but there was no shade. I didn't like the look of the bald brown pilot, and he didn't like the look of the weather; but away he went in a swirl of dust. It was a biggish one-motor machine

with a heavy load against that desert gale, and we made poor progress. It seemed hours before we reached Jacobabad and saw the first relief train below us. We sat down there, saw a lot of dead people laid out in the sun and were challenged by soldiers who said we could not go into Quetta.

Any American pilot or reporter faced with that situation would have simply said: The hell with it. Who says we can't go in? Who'll stop us? But not the Indian. He is a disciplined and timid soul. When a white man barks a command he obeys it. Sometimes he's a bit surly, but if that command is a negative command, such as don't, he don'ts and there is no argument.

Now Chandra and the pilot said they were sorry; orders were orders. I told everybody in sight to go places, and the soldiers seemed to expect this remark. I said we were going in if I had to fly the machine myself, and eventually we got off again. It was tough going. The wind was hot and dry. I lost my hat and the desert sun was beating on my head. At last we had to land again. We were at a desert place called Sibi or something, and the only way of getting farther was on a camel.

There were a whole bunch of camel men around the railway water trough trying to get water for their beasts and having a fight about it. Then what did I find but a car? A car with good tyres, lots of petrol and an English-speaking driver! The driver was game to push on the remaining distance to Quetta if I'd get him through the sentry lines. He agreed to take me for $1.25 an hour, too. I knew perfectly well he was going to suffer a loss on that, so for the first time I offered an Indian more money than he asked.

Surprisingly enough, we were not challenged again until we reached the outskirts of the ruined city.

Surprisingly also, we found the roads pretty good. Once or twice there were holes big enough to drop a box car in, but we skirted these and rolled in the town.

Here a white-faced officer—a mere kid, he seemed—tried to shoo us out again, but I told him I was a doctor and he hurried me toward the race-track where there were a lot of youngsters needing help.

Chapter IX

EARTHQUAKE

LONG before I had left the Painkiller Sahib in Bombay, Quetta was devastated beyond recovery. No building within the tree-lined frontier metropolis remained intact; few stood at all. When I got there the city was not only devastated but doomed. Word was already out that the place would never be rebuilt, human casualties were about half the population: 40,000, or one-sixth, were dead. No one will ever know the exact count.

In some respects that Friday night quake had been the worst in all the history of time. Disasters like the Tokyo quake had killed tens of thousands more than Quetta but none had taken a more devastating toll of the potential victims. Yet at any other time of year the results could have been far worse because Quetta was at many times a cold and wind-swept frontier town when everyone slept indoors. On this May night it was stifling hot; so hot that a third of the population was sleeping outdoors. As a result many who would have perished in their beds still walk in the golden glens.

Once the quake and its succession of later shocks was over, however, this same heat became the most hideous of enemies. It caused bodies to bloat and rot quickly, flies to swarm, vultures to smell putrefying flesh from afar, and strong stomachs to revolt.

When I got there smell pervaded everything. I wondered if I could possibly stand that appalling odour. No words can describe the smell of decaying human flesh; yet no man who has suffered it can ever obliterate

it from his mind. I was soon violently ill and sat in a pot-hole to rest. There was a dead girl in the hole. A man came along and fell into the hole. His eyes were wide and staring; he turned the dead girl over and then came and tried to roll me over too. I guess he thought I was dead. He went along from pit to pit, turning the dead over to see who they were. Soldiers kept shouting at him to stop but he paid no attention. Another man came and sat beside me with two little girls. His arm was broken. He said that when the crash hit he was buried, but close by was an alarm clock which was going. He kept winding and ringing the alarm for an hour, then another hour. It finally attracted a soldier who dug him out, but three of his five children were dead.

I got out of the hole and moved along toward the police station. The last time I was there, Algernon Montague Beatty, Quetta's grand old man, who once hanged nineteen rebellious tribesmen before breakfast, was getting me an armed guard to go out the Persian road. I remember laughing at Beatty's 1901 car, which still chuffed merrily down the road. Now both the car and Beatty were gone for ever. Out of the entire police force of 400, most of whom slept in the barracks, only 39 were still alive.

There was a funeral pyre near the police station and greasy black smoke oozed slowly up through the leafy trees. They hadn't enough wood to burn the bodies and had been using petrol. Now that was gone too, and they used coal oil, which burned more slowly and made the smell worse. They were bringing the dead in black carriages and *gharries*. There had been two horses to the carriage, but the horses were dead and men were taking their places. Heads of bodies hung out the sides; a woman's arm dragged on the ground.

The burners looked at the dead, and if they wore a fez or had a red beard to prove they had made a pilgrimage

to Mecca, they were put aside as Mohammedans and buried. Not many were put aside though; the burners were anxious to set them all aflame as quickly as possible on hygienic grounds.

The burners hunted in turbans or pockets for papers; there was quite a heap of papers blowing about beside the dead. There was money too; soldiers kept watching to see that nobody touched it, but no one seemed to want it.

A sadhu, or holy man, with matted hair and ash-smeared body, was dragging himself through the dust, badly injured. He looked at the pile of dead burning in the shade of a tree and laughed . . . a terrible laugh. He asked the burners if they would cut him in half, and burn half and bury the other half. They paid no attention, but put new corpses on the fire. Helpers brought them tables and chairs and things to make the flames higher.

I pushed on to the race-track, where survivors were lying in tents. Two men were stolidly playing chess, others nonchalantly smoking long hookah pipes. A well-dressed Indian girl went among the refugees, giving them money. She gave me money, but I gave it back; then she got me a bottle of beer and I took the beer. Beside the club, terribly injured Baluchi women were fighting off male doctors. Even with the last breath of life, these devout followers of Mohammed would not allow a male hand to touch them or even to view their hurts. Some kicked, some pulled the cover over their faces, some screamed in horror if a man came near.

Survivors were still dying at the rate of 20 a day and 5,000 operations had been performed in the open, many by veterinary surgeons. There were hundreds of cases of madness and shock insanity, especially among the sheltered women of rich border harems, but the real problem was what to do with 363 orphans. These

luckless brown toddlers were bedded down at the race-track with 6,000 of the worst wounded and surviving officials. The rest of Quetta's former population were either dead or in refugee camps. When I landed there was no place to send the orphan babies, yet they could not remain in the ghost city. With no one to comfort them, put them to bed or tell them stories, they were just 363 bits of human driftwood on a sea of disaster.

Here were little Sikhs in need of friendship, long black hair curled in tiny buns on the top of their heads. Here were spaniel-eyed Rajputana girls, wondering what happened, shocked in the immediate presence of many boys. What happened to their parents, no one knows. There was only one white boy, blond and blue-eyed, who said his name was Hugh. He kept crying for his father. Even before the quake he had no mother. No one knew who Hugh was and so far as I know have not found out yet.

There were a few tribal boys whose fathers were with the camel caravans when the city was wiped out. Even such young gaffers stood out as proud and aloof. They tried to act brave and stoical, wishing the women would stop fussing over them and bringing them food. Give them a camel and they'd get out of this themselves, they said, but sometimes the tears came and were hurriedly wiped away.

Most pathetic were a number of young Persians. Their fathers, who came in with the caravans too, were all wiped out. Now no one could even talk to the Persian boys, who knew no English and no Pushtu or Urdu. So, forlorn and lonely, they sobbed in a corner night and day, wondering what terrible thing had happened. They sat holding their little brown faces in their hands, staring off toward the funeral fires in the hope of seeing dad or mother come through the black smoke at the head of the family caravan and take them home. Overhead,

vultures wheeled in jubilation at this feast, more and more gathering every day.

Down by the bazaar, where usually Afghan and Persian caravans came tinkling in with Oriental treasures, everything was quiet and deserted. A dog worried the body of another dog; a vulture was perched on the bloated remains of a man and tugged at his eyeballs. The man held a goatskin bag of money in his hand; no one touched the money. In a corner a woman and three babies lay dead beside a camel. The camel's legs were broken but it still lived and kept grunting terribly. I told a soldier about the camel but he did not shoot it.

I kept walking and found a garage and a man sitting among the ruins holding his head in his hand. He told me he had worked there three years selling cars; the income was so precarious that he had only now had enough to send to Lahore for his wife and five children; they had been in Quetta just twenty-four hours when the quake hit. He had seen none since, and was bemoaning the refusal of military police to let him dig. He said he could get 40 diggers to help him in a minute, but the order had gone out that those buried should stay buried, and the wisdom of this apparently callous order was soon evident.

Farther along, a woman was humming a lullaby to a baby. I felt sorry for her, because I thought the baby was dead. It was a funny colour, like the colour of an elephant. She saw what I felt and shrieked in English that the baby was not dead; then she undid her shirt and put the baby to her breast to nurse. It was dead, all right, and she knew it.

Pinned to a notice board near the hospital were thousands of telegrams asking about people. They fluttered like dry leaves in the desert wind. Nobody claimed the telegrams because the people they were for were all dead. I passed on toward the hospital.

If ever a man feels like moralizing on the blast that wiped Baluchistan's capital off the map of middle Asia, he has a natural springboard to start from in that hospital and its female patients. Seldom does an Indian woman go to the hospital for any reason whatever, certainly not for having babies because this is ridiculously extravagant to start with, and there are men present. In hospitals some women have men doctors! Your own mother isn't even allowed to help; and if you feel the need of the spiritual aid of a cow, nurses won't let one into the place.

But enlightenment comes steadily if a bit slowly and there were 49 mothers, an all-time high, with new and roly-poly babies in Lady Dufferin Hospital at Quetta when the town turned a somersault. Every last one of these was saved. Not a mother and not a baby perished.

Down the road were the prostitutes of "Chip Street." (A chip is a rupee, or forty cents, the usual charge for such a woman.) There were about 600 of these in the red-light area. They were mostly young but well-upholstered tribal harlots from Kashmir or the Baluchi backlands. Of the 600, so far as had been learned, not one solitary woman escaped. All were buried alive in their houses of easy virtue.

Their houses fell right into the ground and were buried so deeply under other houses that hardly an entertainer or her patron could be dug up before the stench of rotting bodies made it necessary to seal the city until Nature could bring about a clearer atmosphere. When they were exhumed in the winter of 1935 thousands of rupees in silver bangles were unearthed with them because the Indian harlot, being a girl who likes to show her wealth as well as her charms, is practically a walking silver mine.

When I was in Quetta two years before, I watched those Chip Street floozies as they pranced the streets, proud of their profession and flaunting layer after layer of bangles on their ankles, rope after rope of silver about

their necks and whole sleeves of silver around their arms. At times, when the big rug caravans were in from Persia and both cash and wine flowed freely in the bazaars, these Chip Street dolls were stood on the block and an option on their voluptuous charms was auctioned off for limited periods at fabulous prices. Now they had gone out amid nocturnal uproar the way they had lived.

Then there were the zenana women. In India they hate to call a place where a rich man keeps his assorted wives, a harem. That's Turkish, they say, or maybe Arabian. Anyway, it is not Indian; and it is not accurate, because it conjures up a picture of hundreds of girls in lacy veils surrounded by tubby eunuchs and the heavy odour of incense, waiting the command of their lord and master.

In India it's a zenana and there are no eunuchs, and its only connection with a harem is that two to four wives stay there. So do all the children, and the place is kept strictly private from the outside world. Women are not allowed to leave the zenana unless heavily veiled and guarded. There are few attendants and none of this scented air of fragrant incense.

Well anyhow, harem or zenana, with or without eunuchs, a startling proportion of Quetta's zenana women went stark mad in the earthquake. I saw a few of them shrieking and screaming about what had once been streets. The only way doctors could calm them was to give them a hypo shot in the arm big enough to quiet a mule; and even then they twitched like a bass on a hook.

Never having made a decision or faced a problem of their own in all their lives, these irresolute wives were now thrown into a city of death entirely on their own puny resources; and they found themselves unable to meet conditions. They developed neurasthenic jitters while their more stolid peasant sisters from the bazaar jogged about the business of saving themselves and their

children with the bovine acceptance of these things generally shown by a harnessed bullock.

Finally, there were the white women; and they were magnificent. I've often said or written and oftener felt that the white woman in India, particularly in a big military station like Quetta, was a pampered and spoiled nitwit. Not only was she physically incapable of the most elementary usefulness, but her conversation lacked intelligence, let alone brilliance. What on earth they did with their time all day, I often wondered.

But here they stood. These very spoiled la-de-da-loungers. Having lost homes and husbands, clothes and careers, friends and loved ones, they had also lost that lazy affectation. They were working—bandaging the wounded, soothing the dying, giving food here, a dose of anti-lockjaw toxin there. They were fighting the insane and the terrified. There were no hysterics, and no threats of nervous breakdowns among the white girls; yet they suffered and lost in equal proportion with the rest.

Not only did they do what needed to be done with their own two hands, but they made important decisions and organized important salvage links on their own responsibility and initiative. The post office, for instance. Letters were pouring into Quetta by aeroplane and train. Those letters belonged to people. The people were probably dead, but let's try to find out. So the white women started taking out the mail, amazed at the amount of loose cash in unregistered envelopes. Then, when they got messages delivered, there came the frantic plea of sick, hurt or dying people to help them get an answer back. But there were no stamps. Not a stamp in all Quetta. It was the women who persuaded the government to waive all postage and permit mail to leave the town free. I sent a letter without a stamp on it, as a souvenir of death.

Getting this colour stuff and the more factual information required for a spot news story in the midst of disaster was easy; all a man had to do was keep his eyes open and his stomach under control. But getting the news away was hopeless. The hastily repaired telegraph service was going full blast night and day on much more urgent matters than news stories. Still, I had to keep pestering the army—which had taken control of everything—to dash off just a few fragments to my paper. They refused curtly and absolutely, and I dare say the army was right.

By the third day they had burned or buried 10,000 dead; but the toll had steadily risen to more than 40,000 and corpses lay everywhere blackening in the sun. The army going its daily round among the dead was sweating in gas masks, and there was idle and unconfirmed talk of dynamiting what was left of the one-time garden city of the frontier. Survivors fought furiously against this because there were money and jewels and valuable family possessions in the ruins of what had once been mud homes.

I had a boiled rice breakfast and carried on my ghoulish investigations down by the gaol. It smelled awful. Everybody in the gaol was dead. About 200 men. Some were chained to wall and cots. At one place a man's arms hung in mute plea through the bars. The earth shook some more as I passed the gaol. Nobody bothered about that.

From time to time I kept going back in sympathetic fascination to those hundreds of little brown orphans, gathered together by the race-track, and among them I found a dog. A curly, black cocker with the sympathetic chestnut eyes that none but a spaniel can boast. His tongue hung out in thirst as he crouched before a small Indian girl and wagged his stubby tail at every person who passed him, but growled in warning if anyone laid a

hand on the child over whom he'd set himself as guard. He belonged to the chief of police. The chief, his entire family and all his servants, had perished in the ruins. Somehow this dog escaped and found the orphaned daughter of his groom, and now set himself up as guardian of the last link to connect him with a vanished family.

I pushed toward Bruce Road, main street of the cantonment. Here and there small groups were burning their own dead. Some had special permission to do this, others defied authority in their time of sorrow.

Normally all the Hindu dead were being burned in a common pyre, burning 200 to 400 corpses at one time. But here and there the spectacular Hindu processes of grief and mourning were carried out. Here was a boy, himself swathed in bandages, shaking with sobs while he lifted a club to crack open the skull of his father. It was the last thing he would ever have to do for his father. Custom had ordered that he who carries on the family name will crush his father's head before the priestly burners set the pyre ablaze. The boy could hardly lift the club. Then it came down too lightly. It bashed in the nose. He tried again and succeeded.

There was no plundering of buildings, no looting of bodies. If a man had two handfuls of rice he would give you one. Somebody handed me a bottle of brandy. I didn't want the brandy. It was for people who were sick. Here was a second mother carrying a dead child. Here was a man offering five hundred dollars to anybody who would get him safely away on a refugee train.

Here was another hospital. The night nurses on duty were still in uniform, all dead. Their uniforms were dusty and brown as if they'd been sleeping on the ground. One had lipstick on. Her lips were red and hanging open. Nobody else's lips were red. Narayan, who had arrived penniless and ill from Hyderabad, fainted behind me. I

couldn't help him, but somebody got off a camel and gave him a drink.

There were no sahibs among us, no castes, no Mohammedans, Hindus, Buddhists; we all ate whatever we got. It was a triumph of the air force that there was no shortage of bully beef, bandages, stimulants or serums.

Hastily but efficiently organized refugee trains were leaving in a steady stream; many carrying their sad and homeless load to Karachi, some to Lahore. A liner had been chartered to take derelict whites direct from the shambles of Quetta to England via Karachi. Nobody had to pay a fare. All of us who could walk, especially those like myself who came in after the quake, were told to get out as fast as we could. This was not very fast, but it suited me because I optimistically assumed that Karachi would get my stories away in a rush. By day we were challenged by sentries every 100 yards and forced to show passes lest we be looters bent on stripping the bodies of bangles, ear-rings and nose loops. At night we didn't move for fear of falling into pits with putrefying dead.

On that Friday night there was in Quetta a circus complete with three tigers all of which got away alive, two lions which were crushed, an elephant which was so badly wounded it had to be shot. But the real problem centred in four trained bears. These not only escaped but when loose developed a vicious appetite for human corpses. Troops immediately rushed around, insisting the bears be chained up. The owner chained them up, but they broke loose again. They were trick bears; breaking loose was lots of fun and part of their act. The order went out to shoot them. At this the owner, to whom the earthquake itself had been a mere incident, flew into a fury and said if the troops shot his bears he'd shoot the troops. They seemed to take this threat seriously, but the bear man knew his days were

numbered. Some new order was soon to come from the high command and he'd better get out while he and his bears still lived. Accordingly, wounded refugees thought they had all gone mad when this bear fellow and his four shaggy beasts trundled into a third-class carriage, locked the doors and eventually rolled outward toward Karachi with the rest of the refugees.

"However," the commandant wrote in his report, "the bears were thrust off at Sibi and handed over to the ticket collector who protested loudly that there was nothing in railroad regulations appointing him custodian of live-stock and besides, the bears had travelled in a passenger compartment against all regulations." I can just imagine that ticket collector thumbing excitedly through his book of rules in a frenzied attempt at finding out what to do with the four bears. He probably hasn't found out yet.

Among other incidents reported by the general was that of a Baluchi woman dug from the ruins four days after the quake. During her imprisonment she had given birth to a fine boy. Both were doing well in the open-air race-track hospital.

While the quake hit at three in the morning, there were still a few parties going full blast. One of these was a wedding feast attended by 44 persons. All but one were instantly killed. The survivor was the bride. She was not even hurt. Still more miraculous was the fact that at least 50 people, mostly Europeans living on the outskirts near the staff college, slept all through the quake and knew nothing of disaster until dawn.

Not reported by the general was the second stab by death at another young bride. She had weathered the quake but saw her mother and father, her husband of a few months, and several friends killed before her eyes. Then she was evacuated to Lahore and given passage money to her home in Kashmir. Crossing those treacherous

and twisting, shelf-like roads toward the land of the Shalimar, the bus she was in spilled down the bank. Only one person was killed, but 22 others terribly hurt. The one who died was the bride from Quetta, where at sundown the muezzin still climbs the one remaining minaret and fills the air with fatalism.

"What is written . . . is written."

Newspapers arrived by a returning refugee train; there was a rush for them. A young German eye doctor read of his own death, grunted and tossed the sheet away. The long rumbling train rattled into a siding and frightened people piled aboard. None needed a ticket and there was only one destination, yet the habit of a lifetime was so strong that the poor avoided first- and second-class compartments, and piled like cattle into third.

I pushed into a small room for four. Only one other man sat there; then two girls staggered in. The place smelled of disinfectant and dust and the clammy odour of the dead was frightful. To kill the awful glare of the desert, there were thick red shutters on the windows. I soon fell asleep weary and worried about those uncabled stories. Then we backed up and a lot more people piled in; so I, being runt-sized, got up in the luggage rack where I soon grew sick.

Through all that night we rattled toward the coast, stopping from time to time while relief workers tried to give us mangoes, rice balls, bowls of broth, but these welcome visitors were swept away by tearful mourners, mostly women excitedly shouting in a dozen Indian tongues in a vain effort at learning the fate of their loved ones. Even in the dead of night the thermometer touched 100, and the desert winds moaned a song of disaster through the scarlet shutters. A man below me was holding a stricken victim in his lap. The injured

one kept making throaty noises and trying to spit, but couldn't; he was wrapped in a red blanket, but I could see him shaking under it as though his blood had turned to ice water.

Morning came and with it the hideous heat of the great Indian desert. I got out of my bird's nest to stretch. My neck was sore, my tongue furry. The man in the red blanket was still trying to spit. Twice we stopped to take off the dead, then rattled forward again. Two passengers had saved their Baluchi drums and now set up a rumbling dirge with them. Others roared for them to stop. Our wounded man took up more and more room. He was the sole survivor of a family of seven and had been sleeping on the lawn when the crash came, catching his folks indoors. He managed to dig into the ruins and get two people out but they both died in his arms. Soon afterwards a big timber crushed his chest in.

On the sidings we saw empty trains going in to take others out of the ruins. When that day had spent itself and dusk came, it was cooler, and we ran into Hyderabad. There was a long line of people in white suits holding stretchers and a humming hubbub of excitement. At the station gates stood a dozen ambulances. They came to take our crushed man off, but he shook his head and wouldn't go.

The normal running time for the 96 miles of sandy hell toward Karachi is six hours, or 16 miles an hour, but we were going to try it in four hours. Our wounded man thought he could stand it that long, but he was wrong. Someone got him some whisky and when we pulled away from Hyderabad again he drank that, then went all limp and died. Other people in the compartment couldn't stay there with the dead man, so when we stopped they got out and went to other compartments; if they couldn't crowd in, they just sat in dusty stations and waited for another train. As we neared our journey's

end there were only the dead man, one other and myself in our section. The other live man was full of praise for the way the troops handled the rationing of the refugees without having plague and cholera and other terrors sweep down.

He had a deep, musical, singsong voice and it, with the steady click of the rails, sort of mesmerized me, and soon I was asleep. Next thing I knew a doctor and nurse were lifting me out of the car to a waiting stretcher. I told them I was all right, but they didn't seem to believe it and put me on the stretcher. I got up then and got a taxi and went to a hotel where there was food and a hot bath.

Chapter X

TOUGH ASSIGNMENT

FOR three days Karachi accepted with stoic indifference the sight of a flustered reporter racing about, sometimes on a bewildered horse, trying to find a way through a maze of red tape that had sprung up around the simple business of cabling a news story.

First I was told no collect cables could go to Canada because India had no assurances that her little brother of the Empire would pay for them. Touched by this slur the Toronto *Star* at once dropped 2,200 rupees ($836) on the line and told me to shoot. This was delivered to me as 22 rupees ($8.36) with which I couldn't even say "Having a hell of a time; wish you were here."

By this time the earthquake, as news, was cooling off, but I wasn't. I roared around calling important people names. This accomplished less than nothing. I telephoned the Viceroy at Delhi and a secretary did exactly what was expected of him—lost me in the shuffle.

Then two things happened. An apple-cheeked and most amiable cable manager named Bunker said that he, out of his own pocket, would pay for my messages and guarantee their delivery and Toronto called me on the telephone, no less.

While I was swallowing a sundowner with a fellow Canadian who had missed the quake by one day an oily sub-manager of the 65-room hotel where I stopped pattered along to tell me I was wanted on the one and only telephone in the building; a museum-type instrument in a cardboard box anchored in a lobby filled with gaudy posters of impossible steamships. I knew just

what that meant. The telegraph office was going to explain for the fifty-fifth time that I could send no cables. "It's from America!" the man reported, bug-eyed with wonder.

"America?"

"Yes, sahib; from America. You must hurry."

I jumped up and scampered through the blazing sun to the lobby. You never go down corridors in an Indian hotel. You go out into the rain or the sun or the star-spangled night.

The manager looked at me with wonder and respect. "There is a call from America," he repeated.

I picked up the phone.

"Is that Mr. Sinclair?"

"Yes."

"We have two telephone calls for you . . . overseas calls . . . one from Canada, one from London. Are you there?"

"Of course I'm here."

"That's fine. Do you hear me well?"

"Quite well."

"Will you please count to thirty?"

I counted to 30 while the hotel servants gathered and gawped.

"That is good. I hear you. Now will you come to the telephone office? It is urgent. You should hurry. We are just connecting the lines through Turkey."

The man hung up. I wondered where the telephone office was, and I wondered a lot more things; but I didn't wait. I dashed out to grab a taxi. There were no taxis. It was three in the afternoon; temperature 111 and dripping with humidity. The taximen were asleep. But there was a horse. A trained horse. The horse came pulling a big, black cart. I got in the cart and the horse dashed away like Dan Patch or maybe Man-o'-War. The instant he turned the bend from the hotel, the horse

stopped down to a walk, and no amount of whipping or coaxing could pep him up again.

Then the driver took me to the cable office. I'd gone there in cabs so often that the boys all knew me. I was the sahib who went to the cable office and called everybody names six or eight times a day. I must be important because I called even the superintendent names.

"No, no, no!" I exploded now, "I want the telephone office. Telephone and not telegraph . . . do you understand?"

He said yes, and turned his horse around. We got stalled among camels smelling like camels smell. We wandered up an alley, then into a compound full of old iron poles and spools of wire. The driver waved at some steps. I went up. It was the telephone company, all right, and the man inside was a regular first-rate Indian official, because he had never heard of me, never heard of Canada, never heard of overseas calls. He was sipping tea. His feet were on a small table.

"But I was told to come here; there was a call from Canada," I said to him in humid exasperation. He picked up the telephone on his desk, chatted for a bit about this and that, said yes, there was a call from Canada, and I could take it in the sound-proof booth.

That sounded better, and I thought we were getting somewhere. A man with his shirt-tail out guided me down one flight of stairs and up another. Then I wandered in and around a lot of wires in different colours and came out among twelve switchboard girls who stared at me. All the girls wore different colours, like the wires. One was white, one very black. The others were half-and-halfers, all in between. They all had varying shades of make-up on their varying shades of complexion and the result inclined toward biliousness. The girls all stared at me.

The manager was a thin fellow. He didn't know why

I was there. The guide who had brought me didn't know either, so I started all over telling them I was expecting a call from Canada.

All the girls, who had now stopped staring, turned and stared again, and the manager chap grinned as if to say, "Poor fellow, he's probably a refugee from the 'quake zone . . . or maybe the heat's got him."

But he asked some questions on one of his phones and said, sure enough, there was a call from Canada, and could I take it in the sound-proof booth? Then he took me back downstairs to a side alley; and there, surrounded by stray urchins, beggars and camels, was a booth. It looked like one of those stage coffins you see in a magic show; the kind they put buxom brunettes in before sawing them in half.

"Is this the sound-proof booth?"

The man said yes, so I stepped in. Something hit me on the head. It was a bird's nest. I looked up, and another bird's nest hit me in the face. Bird dirt got in my eyes. A man was just tearing the roof out of the sound-proof booth from above. A lot of shavings fell down and sprinkled me. Then some nails.

"Is this the only booth you have?"

"Yes," the man said. "I'll stop the work."

"No," I said, "you tell the office to switch the call back to the hotel. I won't be hit by any bird's nests in the hotel."

The horse went back pretty fast. As he came in sight of the hotel he broke into a gallop. He was a trick horse. This all took forty minutes, but we hadn't yet got through Turkey. A man asked me to count to thirty again. I did that four times. Each time a man said he was hearing me great. One man was in Delhi, one in Lahore and one in Poona, 1,200 miles south.

Then they said would I talk to London. A girl asked if I was there, and I said yes, I was there, and who was

she? She was strictly impersonal and said she was London. Then a man came on and told me about the weather in London. I didn't hear much of what he said, but I knew it was about the weather.

"How's the weather in India?" he asked.

"It's hot. It's hot as hell. It's getting hotter."

His answer was a lot of burps, bubbles and hisses. I'd been all ready to worship at the shrine of science and write a yarn about modern magic annihilating disease and all that sort of thing, but science began to go blooey. Tom Wheeler, a fellow *Star* man, came on the wire in England. "That you, Gord?"

"What's left of me, yes."

"How are you?"

"Tired, Tom, but I got some swell stories and . . ."

"This is Poona," a man broke in. "London says they can't hear you."

I sat and sweated while people in Middle Europe jabbered to each other about not being able to hear India. I got occasional flashes of Italian, scraps of German. I heard vagrant wisps of distant English. A funeral went by the hotel with a shrill of pipes and a clash of gongs. The funeral of people who died from earthquake wounds. I wished Tom could have heard the funeral because it was a good glimpse of India.

But all I heard in the next hour was a man in Poona and another in Lahore asking me to count to thirty. I counted and sweated, then counted some more. At last a precise, rather pleasant-voiced man came on the wire and demanded: "I say, did you ever read *Treasure Island*?"

"Sure I did."

"What island are you talking about?"

"*Treasure Island.*"

"That's right . . . now who wrote *Treasure Island*?"

"Robert Louis Stevenson."

"That's fine," the man said.

"Well, what are we doing, playing games?"

"No," the man said, "I'm London. I'm getting the sound waves on your voice. We have made our adjustments. Here is Mr. Wheeler."

But there was no Mr. Wheeler. There were just burps, and wheezes and grunts. It sounded like somebody boiling the laundry. After a while the *Treasure Island* man came back and agreed he was licked. The weather was against him. It just ended like that. Nobody said good-bye or anything. My first, last and only super long-distance call was a fizzle. I went out and washed the bird's nest off my neck, and discovered I was famous. Papers all over India recorded the reckless ravaging of far distances by this "amazing reporter" and one result was that my cables got through from then on without trouble.

This was the second time since the blast that the papers had made a play for me, but I was more flabbergasted than flattered. A few days earlier, I'd been sitting in the Quetta ruins watching a man, who for the time being had the most gruesome job on earth, and wondering why nobody took his picture.

This fellow was examining the battered dead as they brought them up to be burned, and certifying that they were really dead. He was an Indian doctor and looked pretty well dead himself; but kept sounding the hearts of cadavers about whom there might be some doubt, and occasionally turning a subject over to another man who, without asking any questions, shot a stimulant into limp arms. His aides revived six people that way, but I never found out whether they really recovered. If they did, they've come nearer the great beyond than anyone else in the world, because they were not only given up as dead but actually brought to the funeral pyres for cremation.

Photographers were going around shooting ruins of streets and homes and buildings, but completely ignoring the people both living and dead.

Remembering the sensation caused by Laurence Stallings's *First World War* in which all sorts of shredded bodies were shown, I asked one Indian photographer to get a shot of this doctor looking at the dead as they brought them forward in a steady stream. The shot was a natural; horrible and gripping in its drama.

"Are you an American?" he asked.

"A North American, yes . . . I'm from Canada."

"Have you ever been to Hollywood?"

"Hollywood? Yes. Look, there's a shot. He thinks that girl is still alive."

The man paid no attention whatever. "Garbo," he said. "Did you meet Garbo, when you were in Hollywood?"

"Sure. Oh, Garbo, I don't know if I did or not. Look at this fellow," I interrupted, "the one with the dead baby in one arm and the live baby in the other. Boy, look at that for a picture."

"They tell me Beery is a flyer," the fellow went on, ignoring the gruesome action around him. In fact, it went on like that for some hours. The Indian reporters and photographers were absorbed by Hollywood glamour. The death of 40,000 fellow townsmen right in their own backyards didn't seem to matter much. Death walked right past their feet, but that made no difference. They were hearing about romance and glamour in the far places.

A few days later a paper published within 400 miles of the 'quake zone carried three stories on the disaster—all hand-outs from Simla, 900 miles away—a story about Mr. Goodwin Sinclair, the noted journalist, who filed the longest cable dispatch to America ever sent from a North Indian station; and a story about "A mysterious

American who was seen clutching a telephone in the Killarney Hotel yesterday and frantically trying to get through to his wife, 12,000 miles away, and assure her he was saved from the Quetta disaster."

Both Goodwin Sinclair and the mysterious American were me, as you've guessed. But the pay-off was the front page. There was a picture of Garbo and a three-column scarehead: "Man Who Met Garbo Talks to Us." If you'd read that column you'd have sworn I was important.

One thing I couldn't uncover during that hectic week was the effect of the 'quake on the valley of the Living Dead. This ghostly glen cuts through the golden hills north-west of Quetta.

In it live Buddhist monks who take vows of eternal imprisonment in their youth. Into rude cells carved in the mountainside they crawl as boys to meditate on the sins of the world from that day forward. They never come out again. When they creep into cool catacombs at the back of their cells to die, their bodies stay there to mummify or skeletonize for ever.

Years afterward some other youth takes the same cell for his meditation, with a skeleton or a mummy for company. Two or three days a week somebody pushes a little food in to him through an opening in the rock floor. He never speaks to the food bearer or to anyone else.

Once every seven years pilgrims from Turkestan and Tibet, near-by Baluchistan and distant Nepal, some even from Kashgar, Samarkand and China, gather to pay tribute to these self-made prisoners.

When these slant-eyed highlanders make their pilgrimage they use, for food, the largest soup kettle in all the world. A kettle big enough to boil up a dozen bulls with barley and beans for the making of stew. These kettles have been a puzzle to science down through

the years. They are copper. There is no copper within thousands of miles in mid-Asian plateaux. The kettles are far too big to have been brought in on the backs of camels, the only transportation in the glens. How, then, did they get there? Who made them, and when?

Nobody knows that answer, but every pilgrim knows that when he makes his trek to the golden glens he'll become a cannibal. Not a really vicious man-eating cannibal, but a theoretical cannibal. The idea is that on the last day of the pilgrimage the oldest man among the guests will poise himself over the boiling kettle of stew, twist his colourful prayer wheel, chant a song of fate and plunge in—clothes and all—to become part of the hash.

During the Quetta aftermath, as reports of hideous death, complete destruction of outlying districts and disappearance of others crept into what was once the capital, I puzzled about these living dead. What happened to them? Did they meet death in their cool uplands quicker than they expected?

A runner from the frontier, a camel scout, told convincing stories of the 'quake hitting the glens shortly before it wiped out the city itself. He said it split the mountain of the Buddhist cells wide open, killed some prisoners and sent others scurrying in terror over the glens. Their legs, for years unused to movement, would not hold them up, he said. They collapsed in gibbering madness. They moaned and shook.

Then came a caravan on its sixth day through the hills. No one in the 63 of the camel crowd had known about the earthquake. They were bewildered and stunned by the sights of complete destruction around them. They said the living dead were still in their cells, unconcerned and unknowing; still contemplating the mummies or the skeletons of earlier devotionists around them.

I'd like to know about that . . . it puzzles me.

With the world's hottest desert at its midsummer worst I'd willingly have paid double rates to get a sea berth down from Karachi to Bombay but this was impossible. Every bunk on every sailing for a month ahead was booked by fleeing refugees. I hung around for a week trying to bribe people, then resigned myself to three days of agony and went down by train.

During the Karachi layover I had a glimpse of the strangest stock market this side of Mars. At eleven o'clock of every Karachi morning bar Sundays 50 battered Model T Fords line up in the bazaars and at a given signal streak hell bent for leather toward business. These 50 cars are the stock exchange. There is a driver in front, a contemptuous cool-headed Indian driver who must have served his apprenticeship on a dirt track—and two men in the back.

On the side nearest the kerb sits a white man. Opposite is an Indian. Down races the car at 30, 40, then 50 miles an hour. She stops with a woof of brakes; but before she is really steady, the men are out through the doorless openings and up the steps three at a time.

They race into some guy's office and bellow "Nagpur 39." Somebody answers, "Nagpur 38¾." They have offered the stock at 39, and been chiselled a bit, which Wall Street operators are sure to understand. The broker either accepts this price or rejects it, but whatever he does he roars down the steps again and leaps like a gazelle into the doorless car which already is under way. Back he gallops like mad, to do something about the order. What he does is unimportant to this story.

The point is that there is no exchange beyond this race track. Brokers race pell-mell from office to office, yelling, shrieking, fighting.

They sell anything from baled cotton to baby camels. They get the orders at one central spot and start

careening all over town until they sell. At that same moment other brokers are whooping about the bazaar trying to buy. If they'd all stop things would probably get done just the same. The pace is terrific; the heat appalling; the hours from eleven to two-thirty. How any human creature can stand it without going nuts is a minor miracle.

No other city in India has such an exchange, because no other except Jaipur has roads wide enough to handle 50 speeding cars and Jaipur is not interested in stocks and bonds.

The only type of chariot suitable for such a job is the Model T Fords. That's because you can just jam your feet down on the old Model T and jump away like a greyhound. Motors on these heirlooms are geared up to racing pitch and there are four-wheel brakes.

You wonder, then, why the boys can't all stand in one spot and have telephones rigged to their offices like we do at home, and find out who wants to sell a cow, elephant in foal or maybe a seat in the next aeroplane to England. But then you are back again to the dear old unchanging East. Buying and selling have never been done that way in Karachi. The brokers prefer to gallop about town as though they were playing cowboys and Indians, or maybe here come the British, bang-bang.

I only happened to learn about this when a report in all the papers said Karachi was doomed. Karachi, the ocean gateway to the north, was to be wiped from the map by an earthquake far more devastating than that which turned Quetta into bloody dust. To prevent this disaster the exchange was being closed, while all the brokers carried out a bit of Central Asiatic black magic.

Naturally I wanted to see the magicians in action, so I'd know how to prevent earthquakes too. I rolled up to the big field from where the daily races start. I

expected to find Indians of all types, religions, sizes and shapes. I didn't expect hard-boiled English and Scotch brokers would be down asking a sacred fire or a holy heifer to ward off the earthquake. But there they were, all done up in their racing togs.

I couldn't quite make out the hocus-pocus of the ceremony; but when it was over, the boys jumped into their cars and raced madly down the street to do another day's business.

Chapter XI

RAJPUTANA FOR ROMANCE

A HUNDRED rupees and instructions to meet me with the car in Delhi were wired Baboo in Bombay and this confirmation bounced back by way of the pavement letter writer:

Your ever loving, your ever faithful, your never drunk driver follow the orders of my honoured master. Is it at Maidens you stay; at Laurie's or the Cecil or are you, yes, with the mission sahib? It is no matter. I find my master.

Baboo; driver, with uniform.

I came down by rail through Kathiawar and Baboo rolled in via the dust belt cheerfully reporting that he had cheated all but four of the 27 toll collectors he had passed. The fact that I had to pay double those tolls to the Bombay police later in the month made no difference to Baboo.

After a short rest we swung south-west to Rajputana and turned time backward 2,000 years in the first 200 miles.

To swing into romantic Rajputana you put yourself in the very heart of the fabulous feudatories with walled cities, battle elephants, bejewelled maharajahs, huge but empty harems, slave girls, black panthers on golden chains, and marble palaces atop many a high hill.

Before taking you into these homes of lavish hospitality, where by actual census there are 160,755

"slave girls," let me tell a few things about some of the rajahs.

Recently one married. The ceremony and feasting lasted a week. Every man, woman and child in his state was taxed one month's pay to meet the bills.

The handsome 25-year-old Maharajah of Jaipur has hundreds of polo ponies, scores of palaces and guest-houses, but no wife; he is considered the princely catch of India.

The Marahana of Udaipur—only male in India with such a semi-feminine title—has the largest herd of bejewelled fighting elephants on earth and more than 10,000 wild boars howl and grunt at the gates of the city every night.

Another Rajput ruler recently visited Simla, India's summer capital, for four days and soon afterward presented his state treasurer with an expense account of $84,365 of which a mere $29,000 was "incidentals".

Still another spent $97,000 on a hunting lodge so he could shoot tiger—and actually did—while having a bath.

One rajah whom I met sends cars hundreds of miles daily to collect mother's milk, not for starving babies in his community, but for himself and his guests to drink. Not that it proves much, but this lad is skinnier than a bean pole. Without the flicker of a smile he told me that he rules his state by divine right. "I have a spark of divinity," he said, sipping his thin milk. "It is hedged around and encased within a sheath of stern and sacred commandments." Later he took me to inspect his private arsenal where workers were turning out rifles and swords by hand. He went through a lot of rigmarole of blessing the swords.

Several Rajputana princes, not content with personally confiscating most of the revenue their state produces, have separate privy purses for "Their Highnesses" and in one such state, by report just issued by the British

government, 51 per cent of all girls under the age of fifteen are widows! These, like their sisters from British India, are barred from a second plunge into matrimony. Some still commit suttee, the practice of a hundred years ago whereby a widow burned herself alive on the funeral pyre of her dead spouse. Stories of such acts, even to-day, are frequently coming out of the Rajput country but most of them lack proof.

As contrast, it is important to mention the cultured, progressive and deeply courteous maharajahs of Jaipur and of Kotah, each of whom entertained me, and both of whose states seemed better run than British India. But perhaps you have looked at a map and, seeing many of the places I write of on the main lines of the main railways, consider them quite accessible and open to the tourist.

So I point out that the fastest train between Agra and Jaipur, two of India's biggest cities, takes 9½ hours to do the 144 miles. The trains into Udaipur take nearly as long to do 78 miles and there are no roads of any kind whatsoever leading through that state or into the city. Six or seven states have neither roads nor railways. The only possible transportation is by camel. It is in such places that there are *nautch* girls of enchantment, mesmerists, yogis and a good deal of exotic naughtiness.

Kandayalal Gauba, an investigator for the Lahore *Times*, recently studied some of these back-in-the-wilds princes and among other things had this to say about them:

When, not long ago, *The Green Goddess* was produced on the London Stage, probably those who saw it felt that the part of the Indian rajah was overdrawn. That the ruler of an Indian state, no bigger than one of the smaller counties, a sophisticated Oriental who wore a turban with a faultless dinner jacket and spoke an Oxford accent, should attempt to force a beautiful young English girl into his zenana, in the belief that he could

successfully do it, and that, when retribution appeared in the form of Royal Air Force bombing planes, he should implore the protection of a stone goddess, seemed altogether fantastic and far-fetched.

As a matter of fact, the author, William Archer, had produced a by no means exaggerated picture, and it is safe to say that it was a composite picture of several Indian princes, who could be identified by anyone familiar with Indian affairs. Almost anything can happen in these feudal kingdoms whose rulers enjoy a degree of power, a freedom from interference, which makes them comparable to the despots of ancient history. And among these princes are no doubt characters every whit as theatrical and anomalous as the rajah in Mr. Archer's bright play.

Mussolini and Stalin in forbidding criticism of the state or themselves within their own boundaries were far behind the times compared with some Rajput rulers. These have a law which says that any man who writes or speaks against the rajah or his government is automatically gaoled for five years without the option of a fine. At the rajah's discretion the state may also seize all the offender's property.

Several Rajputana states have official procurers of women. They sometimes travel thousands of miles to buy the most seductive enchantresses. In this connection I again quote Mr. Gauba:

> In the small hill states the harems contain between thirty and forty women. In the more important states the numbers often run into hundreds, sometimes even to a thousand and more. Marie Stopes is unknown and wet-nurses are overworked.
>
> In some states officers share their wives with the prince or diwan with a view to securing posts and promotions. But officials generally are expected to help the prince in procuring women for the palace without reward.

To swing through these feudatories I'd planned a getaway from Delhi with the well-known dawn but got

hamstrung in one of that capital's fifty holidays and spent six hours trying to wangle enough cash and petrol for the trek toward Alwar, state of a temporarily deposed ruler, and only place on earth where you'll find both lions and tigers running loose in the same jungles at the same time.

It seemed incredible in the first part of that run that roads linking such busy spots as Delhi and Agra with Jaipur should be so cracked and broken and so crowded with small game of all sorts. We got lost in a series of cart tracks which just vanished in dust and might have had to spend a night on the road if we hadn't met up with four dude Hindus who came along in a swanky car with a dead tiger draped over the hood.

They told us a rather routine story about the tiger and took us over rock-strewn paths far rougher than anything beyond Khyber to a secret road which ran its first mile through a dry river gorge, then swung up the bank to a wide crimson road so straight you'd have thought it had been gouged out by a giant's arrow. This, they explained, was the maharajah's private road to his private shooting grounds. "You will not find this on any road map," the man said. "It goes to the lion fields."

"Lion fields?"

"Yes; Alwar is the state of the lions. You are likely to find lions and tigers on this road."

"But if it's the rajah's private and secret road, are we allowed to use it?"

"Why not? The maharajah has been absent from the state these two years. This road will take you to Sereska where His Highness does his shooting."

But the Alwar natives, resentful of foreign intruders on the rajah's road, soon brought us to a stop. Spikes had been deliberately dropped in our path—three tyres went in three miles. We fixed one and pushed on with

two spare flats. Another picked up a spike and started to deflate slowly. We left the spike in the hole and hurried forward, stopping from time to time to pump and rather wondering where we were.

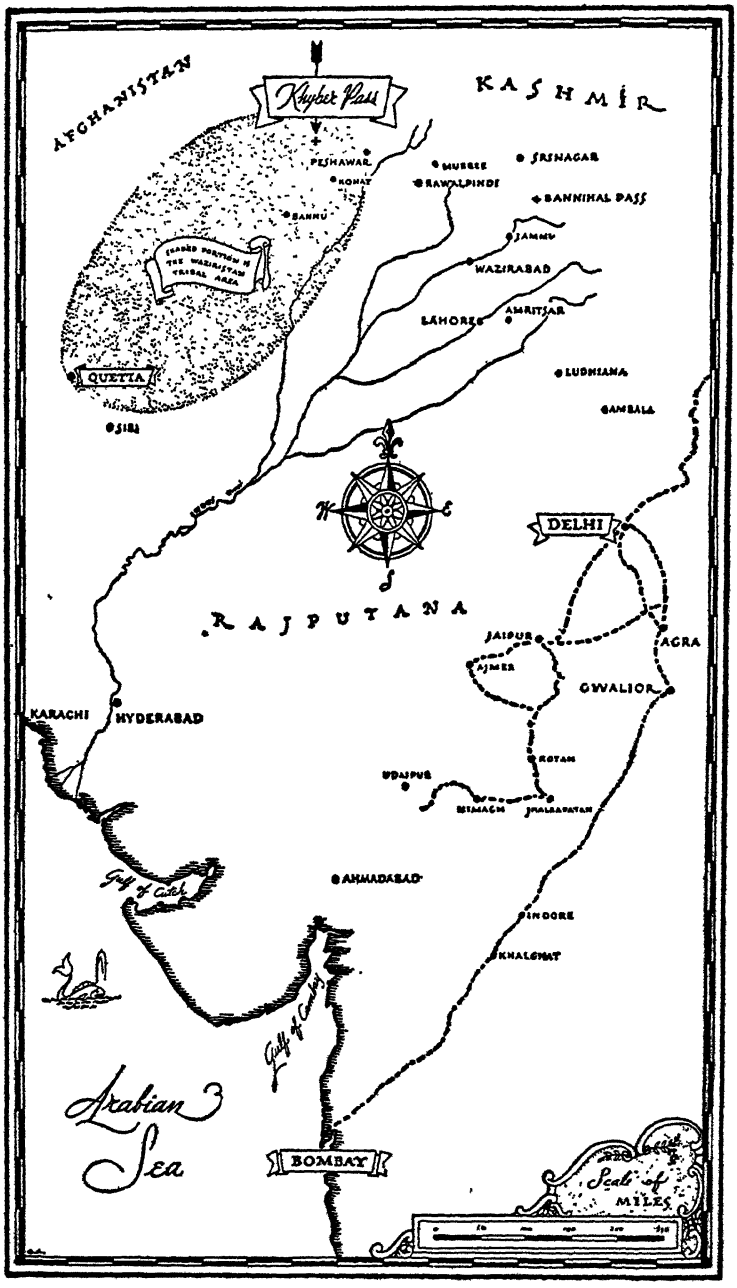
Then the desert ended and we were in stunted jungle. The road started to twist and bend perilously. The stunted growth became thicker; soon it was lush and damp with high trees. Perfect tiger country.

We all took turns pumping. Ten minutes' pumping would take us two miles but when darkness came we decided to ride on the rim. We hadn't passed anybody on the road and according to our guesses we were already past Sereska when we rounded a sharp bend and Baboo screamed, "Sahib! Sahib, tiger!"

The big striped beast was plodding along toward us, taking life slow and easy. His head was down and his tongue out. He looked as if he'd just been running and was all puffed out. At first sight of him I yelled for a stop. I had already satisfied myself that no tiger could get into the car even though the windows were open. There wasn't quite room for him. My plan now was to get out and shoot while he was still dazed by the headlights; then, if I missed and he attacked or if my 30.06 was only powerful enough to wound him, I'd get back in the car and watch my chance for a finish shot.

The brakes gripped and we slowed. I opened the door to step out, feeling all aglow with excitement because never before had I faced a tiger except from a machan or an elephant's back. Then the car leaped forward like a startled colt, and I could hear Narayan shrieking in terror: "He comes! He comes! Close the window. Go, go!"

I was clinging to the car by an open door and had one foot on the running-board when the tiger went by me like a golden streak. Just by luck I didn't fall out right under his paws, and that would have been plenty awkward.


AFGHANISTAN
Khyber Pass
KASHMIR
PESHAWAR
KOHAT
BANNU
MURREE
RAWALPINDI
SRINAGAR
BANNIHAL PASS
JAMMU
WAZIRABAD
LAHORE
AMRITSAR
LUDHIANA
AMBALA
SIBI
QUETTA
DELHI
RAJPUTANA
JAIPUR
AGRA
AJMER
GWALIOR
KARACHI
HYDERABAD
KOTAH
UDAIPUR
BHIMAGH
JHALRAPATAN
AHMADABAD
INDORE
KHALGHAT
Gulf of Cutch
Gulf of Cambay
Arabian Sea
BOMBAY
Scale of MILES

I yelled for a stop but the driver paid no attention and kept speeding ahead. "Stop, idiot! Stop!"

His white eyes gleamed in the dark as he turned around and tried to answer but couldn't. His voice was tight and dry and he couldn't say a word. Eventually he stopped and I went back with the rifle. We had come around a bend by this time so I was careful retracing my way around that curve and wished there was another rifle to back me up. On the other side, just coming up from the nullah, was a striped beast but I wasted no shell on him. It was a hyena which had, like many a jungle scavenger, been following up the tiger.

We neither saw nor heard any trace of the tiger, so I went back to the car where the boys had grown a bit sheepish but happy at sight of a large stone bungalow just around the next bend. We took it for granted that this was the rajah's shooting lodge, but it turned out to be a rest-house for visitors not important enough to stay in the main palace.

Inside a fenced enclosure before this rather elaborate building a half-dozen surprised men were stirring soup in a large cauldron. They treated me with distrust and suspicion, finally concluding that I could not possibly stay there and must leave the state with all speed. I explained that I simply had to stay; my tyres were broken. I was tired, hungry and probably lost.

A cadaverous sort of flunkey offered some of the soup then and said he'd go and consult the diwan. The stew was good and while I was sipping it a big bald soldier came winding through the bamboos with a hurricane lamp in one hand and a long black whip in the other.

When he saw me he looked surprised, held the light up to get a better view of my face, then asked in English:

"Do you speak Urdu?"

"No."

"Hindi?"

"No."

Then he turned to the cadaverous one who had fetched him and demanded in English, so I'd be sure to understand: "Why didn't you tell me he was a European? Let the sahib in at once."

If any experience could be both sensuous and sepulchral, the description fits my entry into that bungalow because the place had been closed for two years and smelled of bats. There is a musky, sexy smell about bats; like the amber base of a perfume, revolting yet in some ways fascinating. There was also a faint fragrance of long-departed grandeur as though famed courtesans had camped there and then passed on.

The bats flew around helter-skelter and sometimes smashed drunkenly into my torch. The bungalow was an inch deep in dust, dry leaves and wads of cotton pulled out of mattresses and furniture by hungry rats or squirrels. I sat down on a gaudy chesterfield. It collapsed beneath me. There were big electric fans in the ceiling and expensive-looking fixtures of crystal, but no power. The backs of elaborate mirrors were all rusted and white ants had gnawed holes in some large paintings.

The bald-headed man came back in a clean suit. He wore a big green turban now and carried a silver stick instead of a black whip. He looked both frightened and suspicious.

"The maharajah . . . he is coming back?" he asked nervously.

"I don't know. I'm a stranger here and don't know His Highness. We just got stuck on the road. Is there any food?"

"I deeply regret it. There is none."

"Is there water enough for a bath?"

"I am prostrated, sahib, there is no water. The maharajah . . . he has sent message?"

"I don't know the maharajah. I never met him."

"But this road . . . this is a private road."

"A man pointed it out. He said I could get to Jaipur this way."

"But who was this man and how did he know this road?"

"I'm sorry, I don't know. I just met him when I was lost."

A lion roared far off on a hill, so I asked about them while the bats fluttered around drunkenly. "Many years ago they were imported from Africa and set loose," the diwan said, fingering his silver baton. "You will find them nowhere else in India. His Highness likes to shoot lions . . . tigers get so tiresome."

"Is this his shooting lodge?"

"No, there." He pointed out the door. The moon had climbed high and white and we could make out an enormous palace almost entirely surrounded by dense jungle. The place was bigger than Buckingham Palace and looked haunted, so silent and dark there in the jungle moonlight. Even one light from one of the many windows would have relieved the solid gloom of that deserted building.

Since there was no water to drink, no food to eat and no lights to read by, I let this fellow steer me up toward the palace while the other men started pumping the servants as to who I was. They were frightened and suspicious of my arrival without warning in the dark, and the more we all insisted that it was simply a pleasure trip without political background or significance the more worried they grew.

Around the palace was a stone wall running from six to ten feet high. At two spots there were openings and near these special lion and tiger traps were arranged. Near by there were cages which had held lions until the poor beasts almost starved to death, but were now empty.

By a system of searchlights a tiger, when lured through this opening in the wall, automatically trained a light on himself and rang a bell in the palace so that His Highness didn't need to get out of the bath or the bed to shoot him. He had shot hundreds that way, the aide explained, and was known by one and all as a very famous hunter.

We strolled through weed-grown paths to a garden where every tree held at least twenty peacocks. As we walked underneath, these set up a terrific bellowing which echoed down the distant mountains and must have startled even the lions. Concrete pavements under these trees were caked inches deep with droppings from these birds, and at the risk of making this a catalogue of odours I mention that the peculiar pungence of that bit of jungle was unforgettable.

The jungle seemed to be crowding in to reclaim its own. Trees leaned over the high wall, creepers covered everything and there was a feeling almost of suffocation as the vegetation hemmed us in as though hungry to devour us.

At the end of the path the aide said: "If we wait here five minutes the tigers will come." We were on a high rock overlooking a stream which babbled cheerily below. We waited, smoking silently, but no beast came. Only a horde of bats flying with the blind staggers. The distant lions still grunted defiance at the moon and the singing stream was soothing as a lullaby.

Going back to the rest-house, the aide kept on pleading with me to send back his dear, dear, maharajah. "See!" he screamed, suddenly falling to the ground and kissing my hand. "I plead, sahib. Send back our lovely leader. The land perishes without him. I have no shoes for my feet, no cap for my head and no food for my soul. I perish without my leader. I implore you; I beg; I beseech; pray, sahib, grant my petition."

I thought the man was suffering hallucinations. He had both shoes and a cap, yet was chattering about their absence. I'd never laid eyes on his ruler, yet he was pleading for me to intercede for him. He might have kept up his oration indefinitely but that little sing-song was cut short when a black boar, evil and vicious, loomed ahead, trotted away from us, then shifted around and faced us in the shaft of moonlight, cutting through the banyans. He pawed the ground briefly, like a bull before the covido, and I thought sure he was going to come streaking for us with all the unexpected speed for which he's famous. He didn't, though; just stood kicking his sharp hoofs into the ground and then went away again.

Back at the bungalow there were two more aides. They said we should keep our lamps burning and lock the doors carefully. I said okay and told the boys who had slept on the veranda of other bungalows to come inside.

"Oh, no," the diwan countermanded. "That bungalow is for guests of the rajah; not servants."

"But you say tigers and lions are sure to pass here in the night?"

"Surely."

"Well, have you any outhouse for servants?"

"It's not in use."

"Then the servants will stop here."

I looked around for the boys. They had vanished in the dark. No amount of calling could produce them. The very presence of tiger had put their wind up. They had sought out villagers of their respective religions and craved shelter.

After a night of listening to the incessant yap of jackals which were running in large packs like wolves, and after tearful farewells from the lodgekeepers, who cried all over our shoulders in prayers that we would

please "send back our dear, dear maharajah," we rolled away into a boulder-strewn desert. For eleven bumpy and treacherous miles there wasn't so much as a tree or a cart track to guide us. Nothing but sun-baked mountain through which we picked our way at six miles an hour.

Then we crossed the state line into Jaipur and a beautiful paved road opened up and carried us into the pink city of the polo-playing rajah, where every main street was 111 feet wide—widest in all India—and there were four first-class hotels. The room I finally landed in had two bathtubs, no less. I asked the roly-poly manager about these, and he grinned: "Twin beds for man and wife to sleep in, twin baths for man and wife to wash in . . . our aim is service."

Soon afterward I had a chance to watch the solemn palaver of a young woman becoming the bride of a four-armed granite doll.

She as a priestess, did not necessarily become a loose lady at once; but the *nautch* girls who surrounded her were definitely in that class. The priest who performed the ceremony by the waving of incense-bearing lamps, the crowning of the girl with flowers, and the placing of silver anklets on her legs, explained to me that many a high-caste family voluntarily dedicates a daughter to the comforting of a god, but that others are put in the temples as a redemption from sin.

That wasn't very clear to me, so the old fellow pointed out that a well-bred and high-caste Hindu girl, if even suspected of flirtation with a young man, was in instant disgrace. Her chances of finding a husband, even the one with whom she'd been flirting, dropped 80 per cent there and then.

"So the parents fetch them to the temples?"

"Yes."

"And you marry them to the gods?"

"Yes."

"But that's silly and you've got brains enough to know it's silly," I exploded. "How can a girl comfort a piece of granite?"

"You don't understand."

"Of course I don't understand. If the girl is here as an entertainer to worshippers in the temple, or even to you priests, I can understand that; but all that nonsense about comforting the gods is childish."

"I think you don't want to understand," the priest cooed gently. "Now these *nautch* girls . . . the deva dazis——"

"Are temple prostitutes," I interrupted. "Trained for a licentious career from babyhood, they are at the beck and call of any temple adherent who can contribute the price."

"You are a very sweeping young man. Our *nautch* girls correspond with the choirs in your Christian churches. They both entertain during a religious ceremony. These entertain by singing and dancing. To be sure, as you so bluntly put it, they devote themselves to the temples in other ways also. But observe these young women closely; could anything more attractive or more modestly garbed step into the choir stalls of the church in your land?"

I agreed.

"Very well, and this is why I say you people do not wish to understand. Go to an American film or theatre and watch how they depict our temple dances and dancers. What do you see? Lithe, sensuous and almost naked girls weaving a can-can or some such insult to Hinduism while drums rumble. It is silly. No true *nautch* girl ever uncovers her body, not even her arms or ankles. She realizes that body revelation is cheapness."

"Or," I added, "that the imagination is more easily captured than the observation."

He shrugged his shoulders and went away. Later I learned that young women who "marry" those stone dolls are often what our folks at home languidly call "in trouble." The god is later credited with parenthood, which is very convenient all round. Occasionally, too, the girl can divorce the god, but certainly not on the ground of desertion.

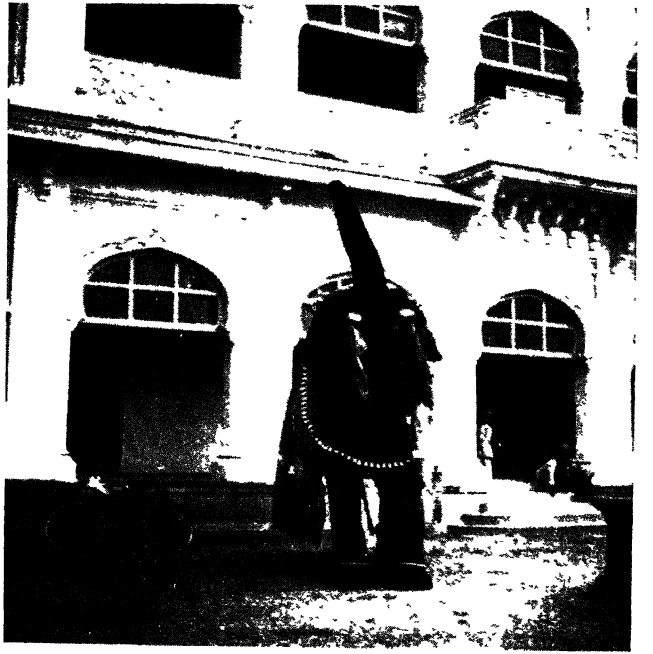
Jaipur divorce, incidentally, is more favourable to the female than any other in India. A girl who marries in that state does so with the understanding that she will be the only wife. If the husband grows tired of her and brings another home, she can get up and leave and he can't force her to return. What's more, the husband is in such case compelled to pay full maintenance of his children even though they go away with the mother. He is not expected to pay for his wife; that would be too much.

After kicking around the pink city for a few days and enjoying every minute of it I pushed over to Ajmer and there met the most disappointed man in all Hindustan. He was Har Bilas Sarda, member of the Indian parliament for Ajmer when Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* exploded on Delhi.

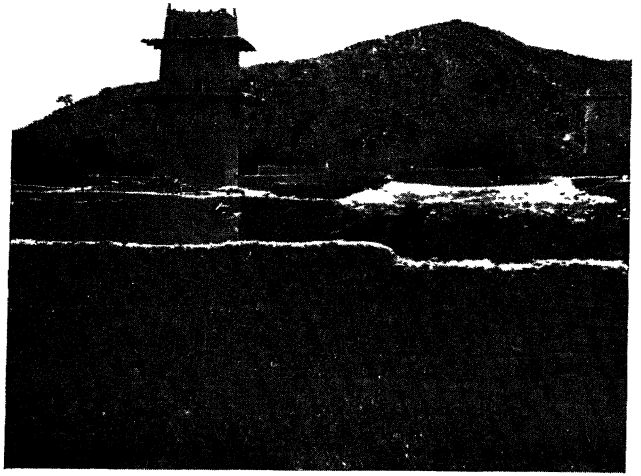
Miss Mayo had told the world about child marriage in India. She told with documental detail what tortures little girls often suffered when wed to bearded giants who already had several wives. And Mr. Sarda thought something should be done. He drew up a bill forbidding the marriage of girls under fourteen. After one of the most bitter debates in Hindu history, it passed. At the next election, Ajmer gave Mr. Sarda his walking papers. He was no longer a member of parliament.

To-day the Sarda Act has about as much power and teeth in it as a technician's guinea-pig. Nobody pays

Heavy going in Waznistan



Indore—salaam from a rajah's state elephant



A typical Waziri home; the watch-towers are manned by armed clansmen night and day

Khassadars, guardians of the Khyber Pass, who are paid for not shooting people on Tuesdays and Fridays other days it's open season

it the slightest heed. Girls of three, four and five years of age are married every hour of every day of every week. Often they are married amid much uproar and whoop-de-doop to men old enough to be their grandfathers; frequently to men suffering disease. In one place I saw there was a mass marriage of every girl in the selected area—319 of them—who were under ten years of age. These are the very things aimed against in the Sarda bill; but, like prohibition in America, the bill was largely ridiculed and ignored.

"But why?" I asked the pessimistic Sarda.

"Oh, don't bring that up," he parried with a sad smile. "Talk of anything else—let me take you out to see the holy fish. Don't talk of child marriage."

"But it is a thing so peculiarly Indian; so definitely silly from our point of view."

"The maharajahs killed it," he exploded.

"The maharajahs? Do you mean they favour child marriage?"

"Perhaps I do and perhaps I don't. The point is that the bill was never accepted in any state. Not a single native state—of which there are five hundred and sixty-two—ever accepted the anti-child marriage bill although a few had a similar law of their own. It was, therefore, absurdly easy for anyone planning an alliance with a child in British India to take her across a state border. Then again British India passed the bill and abandoned it like nobody's child. No machinery of enforcement was set up and has not been set up to this day."

"Then you are right back where you started from; the little girls, who are not even consulted, are married off to stout, strapping men?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so. Why, child marriages are even reported in the papers now."

He tossed me a *Hindustan Times*. In this I found

many reports of marriages, but ages were not given. I did, however, come across these sample advertisements:

Suitable matches required for: Brahman girl of good family, age 11; Sanadhya girl, 10, of good health and education; Burmese girl, 13, talented on piano; and for very handsome, music-loving, cultured and well-connected Bisa Agarwal girl. Reply Box —.

Wanted—A Gour or Sanadhya Brahman boy for a ten years girl—well versed in household affairs. Knows Hindi and music. Parents respectable. Family well-connected.

Wanted—A suitable match for a young, healthy, good-looking, Intermediate and Sahitya Ratna, Goojar Gour girl of 17, earnings Rs. 75 ($30) as a second mistress in a girls' school.

Wanted—Suitable match between 22-34—settled in life preferred—for an English and Hindi knowing Vaish Rastogi girl of 17 years who can also play on harmonium and is well-up in knitting and household duties. No sub-caste restrictions.

Wanted—Saksena Dusre bachelor or childless widower for intelligent, cultured, healthy, beautiful, white-coloured virgin, 16; educated Hindi, Urdu, English; well-versed household affairs, music, crochet, knitting, embroidery.

Mr. Sarda explained that the very young were never the subject of advertisement but rather of nuptial treaties; but he is tired of the business of uplift and reform. If babies are to be brides from now on, let someone else worry over it.

Probably to stop me from asking more questions, the disgruntled emancipator suggested I drive out to Pushkar Lake, a dozen miles through mountains, to see the only temple in India devoted to the Hindu god of all gods, Brahma. There are about a half-million temples to monkeys, elephants, rats, dogs, two-headed women, six-armed boys and deformed camels, but only one to this deity who seems to have contributed more toward the improvement of India than all the others combined.

On the way out I spied a tiny, ring-tailed monkey

clinging perilously to its mother, who was having an argument with a crow over a piece of meat. This looked like a good picture, so I got out of the car and was instantly surrounded by a yipping, chattering army of monkeys who had enough tail to lasso a steer with.

One black-faced old granddad decided to take charge of me and the situation at large, so he bore down with menacing barks and the baring of yellow fangs. Then a horseman came along the road and explained the monks only wanted a few peanuts. I had no peanuts, so the horseman supplied them. This was all right for the horseman, but the monkeys were determined we'd pay a peanut toll or not go over the road. They invaded the car and went on a hunt. Eventually they found some cigarettes which they painstakingly took to pieces and smelled, then went away in annoyance.

The lake at Pushkar was a beautiful panorama of colourful people going to pay tribute to their god, and magnificent buildings grouped around a lake so clear and shiny you'd have thought it was made from chromium. Everybody wore their Sunday best and everybody fed the fishes in the lake, of which there must have been a billion. Maybe a trillion. What do I care? The point is, you could almost walk across this lake on the backs of fishes.

The Brahma temple itself was in charge of a Brahman with a powerful personality. He was so good-looking you'd hardly believe him a man at all, but something created in somebody's imagination. He said he was sixty years old, but looked thirty. He took me up on the roof, told me a lot of legends about how Brahma had once got angry enough to tear down a couple of mountains because his wife kept him late for a parade, and proceeded at once to die as proof of his indignity, which sounds more Chinese than Indian. Then the priest demonstrated a

practical method of dying He didn't really die, of course, but went into a trance which, he explained, made him completely insensible to things going on around him. By doing this two or three times a day a man would get younger, instead of older, he pointed out. As proof of his insensibility, he asked me to jab pins into him while in his trance. I hesitated on this a long time, then tried to plunge a pin into the fellow's ribs and, so help me, it wouldn't go in. I poked and jabbed and bent the pin. But it wouldn't penetrate the man's flesh.

We drove back under a full tropical moon and spent the night in a huge bungalow owned by a missionary, resembling a cross between a mosque and a nightmare, and were wakened by a God-awful racket which turned out to be a padre's dog getting the worst of it from a diminutive but aggressive wild cat. After a Hindu-American breakfast of flapjacks and curry, we rolled on toward distant Udaipur, getting hung up by two dust storms and one flood. This sounds impossible, but so do most things in Rajputana.

Nothing else happened until we rolled in on Kotah, where there was a big railway restaurant with a complete stock of one tin of sardines. While we were wondering what we were going to do about food, the Frontier Mail rattled in with a big dining-car fairly groaning with edible happiness. The Mail couldn't stop long enough to feed us, but we got bread and beer; and a man said there was a bungalow near by where we could get a good lunch.

We went over there and a bearded cook said, sure, he had everything.

"What's everything?"

"Soup . . . you want soup?"

"Sure, what kind of soup?"

"Common soup . . . you like common soup?"

"Yes, and what else?"

"Mutton chop . . . you like mutton chop?"

"Sure, bring the soup and the mutton chop . . . and here . . . take these melons and bring them too." We gave him some cantaloupes we'd picked up in a bazaar and sat down to wait.

An hour went by with no food, not even the common soup. I went out to hunt for the man, knowing that was a bad thing to do because the sight and smell of these casual bungalow kitchens is enough to put even the bravest off his victuals. The bearded cook said he'd just be a minute. Then we discovered that he'd gone out and killed a goat for us. When he had the luckless beast dressed, he made soup from some of it, sausage from another part, chops from the ribs and a roast from the legs. We had a full-course goat dinner. He also brought in the cantaloupes, boiled to a mush.

We got away at three and I fell asleep with a skinful of goat, only to be wakened by the boys shaking me and saying, "Ready, master." They poked the rifle into my hands and pointed to six large deer 75 yards away. I walked sleepy-eyed into the blazing sun, missed three shots, got back into the car and fell asleep again with a loss of considerable face.

An hour later they spotted a single deer in a ploughed field and I got him. The boys started to dress him by the road when two of the rajah's stalkers came along, followed by a funeral. The stalkers said the dead woman on the burial charpoy had been killed by a big man-eater, and obligingly took the shroud from the body so we could see the great gash made in her back by the tiger.

"How far was this?" I asked in some eagerness.

"Mile and a half, sahib. Maharajah sahib he go now with elephants. He say if I see any sahib like come with him he will have guide at next crossroad." This was the Maharajah of Kotah through whose state we were now driving.

I changed my bullets to 2,220-grain mushrooms and we hurried up the road where all traffic had been stopped. Two mahouts were unsaddling elephants in a field of sugar cane. They said the rajah had the killer in a small patch of jungle by the railway track and was forcing him out with beaters.

I wondered why he wasn't using the elephants, but went through the barrier and up the road to a big railway viaduct. A river rattled beneath the viaduct and roads swung off in three directions through low bamboo jungle. Two trucks were drawn up beside the road. One was a sort of house on wheels where a white-smocked butler was getting tea ready. That and the railway and the hundreds of people standing about made this look a most unlikely spot for tiger or any other kind of big game.

"Maharajah sahib, hi?"

The butler waved toward a road swinging away from the river into the bamboo. I started in there with the two boys, wondering what was going to happen and hoping it would be exciting. The boys found out that this tiger was responsible for thirty deaths and that a reward of two hundred dollars had been jointly offered by the maharajah himself and by the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway, whose section hands it had been picking off with unpleasant regularity.

Baboo was carrying my rifle; but when we got into the thicket a little way, the yells of the beaters coming toward us unnerved him, and he hiked back.

"Come here, man, bring the rifle," I shouted.

He stopped, set the rifle down and pattered through the dust toward the trucks and safety. Narayan, who had been terrified by the sight of a tiger two nights earlier, was stalking along in advance of me, carefree and content. Nothing seemed to be worrying him now. He waited for me to catch up, held up his hand and whispered, "They come." It was all quite dramatic.

There were no trees to get into, and I wondered just what kind of fool I was to be after a man-eater on his own level with the added peril of being sniped by the rajah, who, of course, didn't know he had an ally in the field.

What was coming, however, was not the tiger but the beaters. They were silent now, weaving their way through the straight bamboo shafts. "Tiger dead," Narayan said, ending the adventure before it had started. "Maharajah sahib kill him, one bullet."

We pushed on, and there, sure enough, was the dead man-eater. The rajah, who won his own reward and that of the railway, was making pictures in the dying light of the day but refused to get into his own pictures even though I took them.

"Boy Scout stuff," he grinned. "Here, let me show you something."

He told me to feel the tiger's stomach. It was all full of hard lumps like stones; and as I felt these, the rajah snapped my picture. When we opened the big brute these hard lumps turned out to be silver jewellery from the wrists and legs of his unlucky victims, most of whom had been women. There was also the jagged neck of a beer bottle.

Darkness clamped down on us with all its tropical speed then, so we trooped back to the tea truck, nibbled a biscuit or two, then pushed on to the next state, which was Jhalawar, and where we again slept in the rest-house of a prince surrounded by high-caste hangers-on who stared at me as though I was something in a cage. At least two were always watching me like hovering death itself, while two others, as in Alwar, kept pumping the servants as to who and what I was, and never being satisfied with the answers.

In the morning they shyly took me into a garden to seen a strange tree. "Nature's oddest growth," the men

said, looking at the tree. It was just another tree to me—a short tree with thick, fat leaves. "Feel it," the men urged.

I touched a leaf and jumped while the men laughed. The tree was electrically charged. They said that if I had a compass, the needle would turn handsprings in the presence of this electric tree; but my compass must have been all fagged out. Anyhow, it just pointed north like a well-mannered compass should do.

Next day, which was an agony of getting lost in cactus deserts and sand-storm, I had two encounters with reptiles. I don't remember what town or even what state this was in; but I remember sitting like a baby in a tin bathtub, while a green scorpion nonchalantly walked in through the drain, took a drink, gave me a dirty look when I splashed him with water, then walked out again.

Later I sprawled on a cot reading mail from home when what should squirm in but a long and mean-looking snake.

He came through the front door, crossed the concrete on to the rug, smelled around my shoes and started out a different door. I grabbed up a club to go after him, when the guardian of the bungalow warned me to let him alone. This snake paid frequent visits, he said, and people were always wanting to kill him, but he kept the rats away, and "wouldn't I rather have snakes than rats?"

"What kind of snake is he?"

"Russell viper."

I said I'd rather have the rats.

"You wait, sahib; I show how you get killed for sure if you hurt that snake . . . other snake will come. Always in this place one snake follow another wherever he go. If first snake hurt, second snake he smell and go kill."

"You mean another snake is coming into this room . . . another Russell viper?"

"Yes, sahib."

I sent to the car for my camera and waited in readiness. In twenty minutes the second snake came in, followed the identical path of the first, and went out the other side. I got the picture, but didn't disturb the viper.

Chapter XII

UDAIPUR CONQUEST

THE forbidden city of India is Peshawar, at the gateway to Khyber; but the impossible city is Udaipur, in the heart of Rajputana, where 266 of India's 500 or more princes still find it good fun to go in for splendour and magnificence.

Soldiers keep you out of Peshawar, where vain Pathans stalk the bazaars with loaded rifles, yet Peshawar is on the main line of the fastest and finest railway in India.

Nature in all its savage fury of dust-storm and howling monsoon, tangled jungle and trackless plain keeps you out of Udaipur. To be sure, a railway runs to that sacred city of the wild boar, but it's hitting a rare old clip to cover the 78 miles between Nimuch and Udaipur in 8 hours and 20 minutes—about nine miles an hour.

One of my hopes in this jaunt through the back alleys of the tiger country was to put a car over that road, and when I mentioned this hope to E. M. Moffatt, a missionary of twenty-five years in India, he was keen to share the fun. Udaipur was so remote that his quarter century in the country had never carried him there, and India, itself, was so routine, he said, that he'd never seen a cobra or a tiger.

Everyone told us it couldn't be done. The most hopeful view was that we'd get stranded and have to be hauled back behind a team of camels; the most gloomy was that we'd get lost in a dust-storm and the jackals would pick our bones.

So on that hot summer evening when we ran into

Jhalrapatan, capital of Jhalwar state, we felt that adventure was in the offing. The plan had been to make Nimuch, an army outpost, on that dusty night, but three of our six tyres fell victim to the razor sharpness of bullock shoes which littered the road, so we had to seek shelter 85 miles from our take-off town.

The road here was blood-red and ran into the compound of an equally red palace, where a bare-legged guard stopped us and then, fearing that we might be special guests of the maharajah, immediately got worried, fell on his face and asked us to forgive him for having done what was, obviously, his duty.

Before we had a chance to ask directions a big fellow with whiskers equal to the wingspread of a swan hurried out and said we could put up with the state horse doctor. We hadn't asked to put up with anybody, let alone so important an official as the state horse doctor, but now it looked like a good idea, and we decided to stay.

Behind the palace there were three or four great houses for the rajah's friends, and down the road a bit there was another large bungalow, tactlessly labelled, "For Second-Class Guests." We thought this would be our headquarters for the night, but, as it turned out, there was a third-class place, too, and that seemed to be our rating.

The horse doctor turned out to be a charming old gent who rode a bicycle instead of a horse, and seemed wounded to the quick when we chose to pass up the lumpy sausages he sent us for dinner. The presence of sick and dying horses around the bungalow rather put us off sausages. We couldn't be quite sure.

The song of bugles wakened us early on the day of the assault on Udaipur, but it took two hours to fix two of our three tyres. I scouted around for meat for breakfast, but couldn't get any, so we loaded up with coco-nuts,

melons and oranges and headed away toward Nimuch with a rifle, ready to do a little pot hunting.

All the way from Delhi, 500 miles away, we'd seen herds of spotted deer or black buck, but my reputation as a marksman had sunk lower and lower as I missed shot after shot. Now I discovered that the sights on my rifle were set for 400 yards, so I fixed them at 150 and grew more hopeful that that day would see meat in the pot.

Ten miles out of Jhalrapatan we spotted a lone buck ambling through tall elephant grass and I knocked him over. It was a good job I hit him because we saw no more in the 85 miles to Nimuch.

There was a bungalow in this town in charge of as evil and foul-looking a creature as I ever saw. He reminded me of the most grotesque caricatures of Shylock. His smock was filthy and his stained billy-goat beard wiggled up and down as he chewed betel nut in toothless jaws. His eyes were piercing like shoebuttons and he had long, bony hands like the claws of a vulture. He agreed to cook the deer and supply a few vegetables for a dollar, so we set him to work and unloaded the car for the attack on Udaipur. All we planned to take for the remaining 78 miles were beds, water, guns and food. An hour passed, but no deer. A fierce, baking, dust-laden hour.

I strolled back to the kitchen. Hovering over a stone slab on the mud floor was this vile-looking khansama chopping meat into tiny shreds. Chickens walked around him, occasionally seizing small bits; growling dogs lurked in the background. Mangy dogs with nasty sores. The old ogre was still chewing industriously and spitting crimson juices across the meat. I hurried away in despair.

But the food finally arrived and was served by a one-eyed Moslem who wore the pictures of his three wives in silver lockets about his neck. Like the other man, he wore a smock filthy beyond imagination and a cloud of

flies followed him into the room. By some bit of magic the food tasted good, so we hurried through that and pushed on for Nimbahera, 16 miles away. This run all but suffocated us. Dust inches thick was whipped up by the wheels and engulfed the car so that we could see neither sideways nor backward. Only at the front were there openings at all.

We passed occasional camel caravans, their drivers shrouded in dusty turbans which covered their mouths and noses. The car heaved and lurched but the motor purred on smoothly. Occasionally we dropped into ruts so deep the axles stuck fast, but each time we managed to push our way out without help.

Rivers, which were unbridged, were so low that the water came only to the axles and provided no problem. We stopped in most of these to cool the tyres and let the dust settle. In one of these stops I found that the cap was off the petrol tank, but had miraculously caught in the bumper supports and hung there. At least two cupfuls of dust must have fallen into the tank, but the motor hadn't spluttered once.

We reached Nimbahera in two hours and were greeted by a wildly excited village which had seen only one other car in a year. People came shrieking and yelling around us. Most of the children were naked, girls with shaved heads and boys with long hair occasionally done up in pigtails and kewpie curls. This is to fool the gods whose evil ambition it is to kill little boys. It doesn't matter much if the gods kill girls—there are always thousands of them to spare. The gods, however, are not given credit for much intelligence or observation.

We were stalled in this town about an hour while sleepy caravans were moved out of the road and the bazaar was cleared of enough grain, cucumbers, wood for the burning ghats, and sleeping citizens to let us pass. A soldier came up and warned us not to go on. We'd be

lost or killed, he said. Then it developed that there was a bus line out of town and that sounded pretty simple, so we looked up the owner and he, too, said we could never, in a week of Sundays, make Udaipur.

"Don't your buses run through?"

"No, sahib. Once we tried it, but it could not be done. Darkness is coming now. You must not go on. You will all die."

"What's to make us die?"

"Thirst," he said pessimistically.

We decided we'd still go on.

"Then I must send with you a guide," our friend of the road explained. "The road goes through desert and jungle. It is yet 64 miles."

We said, no we didn't want a guide; so the man gave us a pot of tea and some strange advice.

"Do not run over a dog," he warned. "A man, yes. Run over a man if you will. A dog never. Take great care."

To accept this advice was a bit difficult; as soon as we reached the outskirts of this hideous hamlet growling dogs surrounded us by the dozen. Their snarls and yelps brought other dogs. Evil dogs with skeleton shapes. Wounded dogs. Poodles with the scars of battle on their starved bodies. Soon there were 50 or more dogs in front of us and a dozen naked children hanging perilously to the luggage rack at the rear.

We kept going and they all eventually left us and dropped back. The road then became a hang-over of loose boulders and deep holes and howling winds. Dust engulfed us in swirling eddies. It was hard to breathe. The car, always in low gear, was using petrol at a perilous rate. Time after time roads branched away like jigsaw puzzles, but we travelled in a seagoing manner, taking sights on distant palm trees. An hour went by and four miles with it. Then we were in jungle with thorn bushes

clawing at the car and making spooky noises as powder-dry branches rubbed against windows and fenders.

The sun, straight ahead, sank lower and lower. Behind us a full moon rose. It was one of those savagely beautiful evenings you seldom find outside the tropics. We came to a river which looked impassable. The stream itself was shallow and clean, but on either side were deep muddy pools where caravans had rested. Cottony clouds drifted in on a high wind. The sun, now too low to help us, caught the clouds and turned them into golden billows that rode across the sky like baronial banners. We went ahead and tested the water holes. One was too deep, so we filled it with stones and got across all right. The other rose to the lights, but the car didn't balk.

Indian twilight is normally a fleeting moment. This night, surprisingly enough, the light seemed to hold and the road improved. We managed to get into second gear and made another four miles. We were now 24 miles from Nimuch. Then, to our surprise, we heard in the distance the sound of a motor. It was too dark to see clearly, but the more we listened the more certain we were that a car was approaching from the other direction.

We pushed on and then with a sickening thud the car went into a deeper rut and hung there on a boulder. Out of the gathering gloom we saw headlights. They came toward us slowly. Then a white truck loaded with women and children loomed in the desert. Perched on the fenders were two men with shotguns.

They stopped and another man, festooned with bandoliers and carrying a big-game rifle and a black pistol, got out and demanded who we were and where we were going.

"Udaipur," we chorused. "For fun."

"Udaipur! Impossible. You can't get to Udaipur. I forbid it."

We didn't want to start any argument because we

Meat for the pot—Rajputana

After the Quetta earthquake—survivors encamped outside the devastated city

A merchant street scene in Quetta

The Author coaxing roadside monkeys, Rajputana

were stuck but this bird was pretty high-handed in refusing things. He turned out to be "High Highness the Maharajah's chief inspector of police," and a very charming fellow indeed.

"This truck," he said, waving his hand, "has come from Chansapur." I'm not sure of this name. "We started at six this morning. It is now seven at night."

"And how far is Chansapur?"

"Twelve miles."

"But you stopped for food and rest?"

"No, sahib. Only to push."

While we stood there talking the women piled wearily out of their truck and pushed our car into the clear. The police inspector demanded that we turn around and follow him back. We refused. He argued. When we still refused he said all right, it was the folly of madmen to go on, but insisted he would go with us. He was determined we shouldn't get ourselves killed in his territory.

We soon knew why it had taken that truck 13 hours to do 12 miles. The road now became a 20-horse-power assault of all the furies. Some places it caved in with us. In others we had to hack through trees or move logs. This, in the dark, was risky because of snakes. We saw only one snake, but he was a reminder of all the unseen enemies that *might* have been around. Headlights occasionally picked out green eyes watching us in the dark. Foxes and jackals and hyenas.

There were no tigers, but soon we were to reach the thickest wild boar jungles in all the world. The boar in this area can kill a tiger with ease. This had been proved by the maharajah eleven times. On these occasions he put a full-grown tiger into a pit with a full-grown boar and on each occasion the tiger was either gored to shreds or chased about the ring in humiliation and defeat. You've probably seen it all happen on the films.

We came then to thick forests. Trees were big and

black and menacing. We all got out and went ahead charting a path. When we got through there clouds began to gather more thickly and lightning danced to the right. A serious storm in there would have hung us up a week—perhaps longer, depending on how high the rivers rose.

"Moffatt," I said, "we're through. No use smashing the car to pieces."

"We've got to get this fellow back to his village—this Chansapur place."

"Why do we? We didn't ask him to come."

"It's only eight miles farther."

"Sure, and Mount Everest is only four miles high."

We pushed on another mile or two; then the road ended on the top of a bluff. At the bottom was a river in which crocodiles stirred restlessly. We went ahead with flashlights to try to find the path. It was dangerous to test the depth of the water. Lightning flashed across almost the entire sky and thunder was heavy and distant. Moffatt optimistically said it wouldn't rain. In fact Moffatt was always optimistic about everything except how much money the folks back home were sending his missionaries.

"Listen," I said, "this river is the pay-off. We camp here. We can't cross in the dark. The petrol is too low." We inspected the petrol with a torch. What we had was dirty and there was barely enough to get us back, let alone to Udaipur. The police chief was ahead testing the water depth. He said the water was all right, only the other bank was so steep he didn't think we'd get up.

"Let's try," Moffatt said, with the invincible ring to his voice which pioneers must have had.

"No; if we don't make it, we're sitting right among the crocodiles in that river bed. Then if it rains, what happens?"

"You're imagining those crocodiles," Moffatt said;

"there isn't a crocodile in the whole river. Besides, what about this police fellow? He's been very decent."

"Well, you speak his language. Tell him we're sorry, but this is the end of the line. We'll try to get on to-morrow, but meantime he'll have to camp here with us."

I expected the police chap might have been sore at us leaving him out there in the blue, but he was relieved. We swung up the river a piece and found a village of two huts. The peasant owners had just harvested some grain and this was piled up on sticks out of the way of cattle and camels and made a fairish shelter.

We spread our beds under there and hadn't them down four minutes when rain came hissing earthward in sheets. Then the downpour abruptly stopped and the full moon came out. A white shape came out of the dark and walked unsteadily over our beds. A cow. Another followed and took a sample nibble of my pillow. Still a third white shape came paddling through the dust.

This proved to be a thin, bearded man with a pail of water and a brass jar of milk. Our two servants went up to his place and came back with a bamboo chicken-cage. They spread canvas from the luggage rack over the bamboo and made a tent.

Moffatt and I ate the rest of our morning deer and a tin of fruit. Then we spread our beds under the grain stack again and tried to sleep. The storm came on us again in all its equatorial vigour. Rain poured in gallons, but Moffatt, resigned to this, decided he'd stay where he was and get wet. I chucked my bed into the car and when the winds and the rain continued to moan Moffatt came in too.

The boys under their chicken-coop never complained, and the chief of police, by some stunt of mesmerism, produced a horse, which he mounted and rode away.

With a rifle in one hand, the reins in the other and the

tassel of his crimson fez floating in the rain-filled gale he was a romantic and courageous figure going down the mud bank toward the crocodile-filled river on his way home. We caught heroic glimpses of him as the lightning danced, and when he reached the far bank he stood there and shouted back that he'd send two men out to guide us wherever we wanted to go in the morning. Then he suddenly remembered something and splashed his way back through the swelling river to get our calling cards, of all things. He wrote down our next-of-kin with a rather ominous flourish of Moffatt's pen, said his farewells all over again, pulled his cartridge belt in a noose and was off.

I fell asleep then and was awakened by the snarl of wild dogs. Moffatt was back under the grain pile and Baboo was in the car snoring blissfully with his stubby brown toes sticking out a window. A full moon rode high in the sky and the night was so bright you could almost take pictures in it. The rain had cooled the ground, too, and flattened the dust and altogether it was a pleasant morning.

Moffatt woke and yelled at the dogs. For one uncertain minute I thought they were going to attack him, but they slunk away growling and snarling. I pulled my bed out on the ground and went back to sleep. About five I woke to discover a strange shape beside me sleeping with the regular relaxed rhythm of an exhausted child. This shape was under a white blanket and I couldn't see if it was male or female. By its head was a tiny black dog shivering with cold.

About an hour later this shrouded stranger sat up, scratched itself and went to a tiny shrine near by, where an oil lamp was burning and a white prayer flag fluttered in the breeze. It appeared to be a woman but I wasn't sure. As I watched, it gathered some dried cow manure from a hollow stone put there for the purpose, lit a fire

from the lamp of the shrine and brewed some tea. The dog hovered near the fire which was built in a small hollow. The last flicker of light had hardly died out when the pup jumped into the hole to warm itself. It yelped from burns once, then settled down, glad to be warm, no matter what the pain.

The shrouded figure went to the stream and bathed, then came back and dried, using the shroud under which it had slept as a towel. It was an old woman. She gathered up a few things, including the protesting pup, and shuffled off without even a glance at us.

The sun was just coming up when I woke again. Moffatt's bedding was wet and he was cold. Baboo was still asleep under the wheel. Narayan, stark naked, lay in his chicken-coop. He is the cleanest man I ever met of any race or nationality and since he had to wear his clothes one more day at least, he refused to sleep in them and chose to go nude, which is a rarity in Indian males.

He and I went down to the river and bathed and when we got back the old man who had brought us the water and milk before was busy milking a buffalo for us.

We had a flat tyre and four gallons of petrol and had come 44 of the 78 miles to Udaipur. The river ahead was swollen and we saw no hope of getting through even with a tankful of petrol, so we turned around and headed back to Nimuch.

The return trip was easier than going out, because the dust had stopped suffocating us and we made the 44 miles in slightly under five hours.

Moffatt, however, was determined to see Udaipur, so with only an hour to spare he got washed up and fed, then caught the train for several more weary hours across the desert. I began to feel that perhaps I was a cream-puff tourist after all. To be sure, we had put the machine over 88 miles of road (44 in each direction) which every expert agreed was impassable and we had proved, if

nothing else, that the car could take punishment and like it. But Moffatt, who had set out to see Udaipur, was seeing Udaipur, and I, who had aimed at the same conquest, was in retreat. On the other hand, if the car became a wreck, it was my fault, all my fault, not Moffatt's.

When Moffatt had gone, the evil-looking khansama at the bungalow, realizing that I was strange to the wiles of India, recalled all sorts of extras he should have charged us and stood there demanding payments. I have never before faced a human creature who so completely reminded me of an imp and a devil. I was tired, hungry and caked with dust. The thought of another hour in that hut revolted me, so we loaded up and moved off again, paying the man the exorbitant tolls he had taxed me.

Chapter XIII

Salvation Round the Corner

IN Italy and Germany and many a Balkan state every youth is a soldier some day before maturity. In Burma and Siam and many another Buddhist land every boy has a year or so in the priesthood. In Tibet about a third of the male population are licensed bandits, while half the remainder are priests.

India tops all these surprising statistics by supporting ten to twelve million recognized criminals, about ten million priests, and three million sadhus, or yogis, who prowl the back alleys seeking salvation and the simple life.

To coax these twin delights many slash themselves with knives, gouge out their eyes, beat themselves with chains, starve themselves, sit for years on beds of nails, and generally play hell with their feeble constitutions.

Between the Rajputana states and Delhi lies the town of Ghobardhan, which in English means "Cow Manure" and is, therefore, a very sacred place indeed, where self-punishment reaches practically an unbeatable height.

As these words are tapped out, for instance, 40 men, all of them apparently in their right minds, are doing a 13-mile face-fall.

There is in Ghobardhan a hill 13 miles around. These 40 men start at the taw line and fall flat on their faces. They get up; put their feet where their face was before and fall again, then again and again and again. It goes on for six hours a day, after which, being union face-fallers, they take a rest, eat, have a bath or take in the movies. Next day they start all over again. After a few

months they've gone around the hill, gained merit, and entered the bottom rung of accomplishment.

Their next job is to carry a stone around. They do this by falling on their faces for 13 miles and after each fall reaching forward and putting the stone as far ahead as they can. Then they start that face-falling all over again.

During my stop I watched two men do the stunt with 108 stones each. It takes these men an average of three and one-half years to get around the hill leading with their chins day after day, month after month, in rainfall and burning sunlight, all to gain a better life in the world to come. They are usually delighted at a chance to lie over on their sides and talk to visitors.

Of the two I watched one had an enormous and enthusiastic gallery who cheered him on every time he bit the dust. The other had practically nobody rooting for him, so I asked how come this partiality.

It seems that he was a professional face-faller and the other a strict amateur. He had been hired by some pious Bengal banker to take four years off and fall his way around the hill with 108 stones. In so doing he got four hundred dollars while the Bengalee got all the honour and glory in both this world and the world to come. The face-faller's body had protected itself with thick callouses on the knees, chest and chin just where he fell. His chin jutted out like a baseball and the pads on his knees were two inches thick.

He said he didn't quite remember how many years he'd been falling around the hill; about a dozen, he figured. The first time he went around reading a verse of the Hindu bible aloud, then falling on his face, picking up the bible and starting all over again. He had to give that up though; the bible couldn't stand it.

Most famed of the 40 face-fallers is Krishna Ram, named after two gods, who has spent the past 20 years

of his life falling around the hill, but is just now on vacation pending the start of his most ambitious stunt.

I found this fellow sound asleep in the shade of a mango tree and had trouble waking him. When he did scratch himself into life he was most amiable and invited me to sit beside him and his private god while he lit a couple of pipes—one for himself and one for me—and told the story of his life, not omitting several passionate affairs in the godly manner. He was Benares-born, but the routine punishments and pious racketeers of that town and the noisy hordes of pilgrims coming to the Ganges in the hope of finding death or salvation bored him so he walked the 514 miles to Ghobardhan pulling his coffin on a cart behind him.

First-class holy men in India often have their coffin handy. It is generally a stone box in which they carry a few provisions and a pet idol or two. When they die it is the duty of the pious to pull or carry this stone box to one of the sacred rivers, the Ganges, Jumna or Brahmaputra, and toss it in, body and all. Only holy men and babies are thrown to the Ganges without cremation in Benares.

This chap fell around the mountain with one stone, twice with eight stones and twice with 108 (corresponding to the number of beads in a Hindu rosary). Now, when he has rested up a bit, he is going to push his stone coffin and carry his portable god around the hill with him. Somehow he's going to work out a scheme whereby he falls smack on his forehead instead of his chin. He figures he can do the trip in 11,873 falls without splitting his head open.

"And what does all this gain for you?" I asked.

"An answer to my prayers, sahib." He said this with bashful simplicity, at the same time smiling a wide, happy smile which showed almost perfect white teeth.

"And your prayers?"

"That I may never be woman, sahib." Krishna Ram, in case you're worried on the point, is still a strict amateur in face-falling.

Should you wonder why the holy boys choose this hill to fall around, I point out that in the bold and bloody past when gods roamed the land, Indra, god of thunder, got pretty sore on the folks in this district and pelted them with storm after storm. The people, in terror, ran to their own native god, Krishna, for salvation. He picked up a mountain, held it high over his head until the thunder and rains had passed, then chucked the thing into a lake. Since then it's shrunk a bit and become a rather dumpy hill, but the lake is still there full of fishes the size of a canoe. The legend sounds pretty silly to us, of course, but millions of Indians believe it completely.

From this town of the face-floppers we drove through a maze of camels, bulls, goats, monkeys and assorted wild men to Brindaban, a village of 803 buildings of which 564 are temples. The largest of these, flanked by the palace of the Maharajah of Bhartpur, into whose domains we had now wandered, recently caused the sanitation squad a lot of trouble.

In India, as I've mentioned perhaps too often, it's a hideous sin for a woman to be a widow, and among accepted procedures for showing public regret for this state is to become a temple entertainer, sort of cross between a singer, a scrubwoman and a whore.

More than 1,000 Bengal widows were in Brindaban seeking forgiveness. During the same six hours that the near-by face-fallers prostrate themselves these women chant a mournful dirge, starting with the names of two gods. "Ram Ram Sita Ram: Ram Ram Sita Ram." If you say that long enough you'll go goofy or fall asleep. The women shrill it over and over again in the gateway to the temple. And for this they get one cent and a cupful

of rice while the one who contributes this largess reaps the glory and the benefits.

But perhaps, too, they have other activities. In any case there are 800 priests in the main temple and 1,000 singing widows adjoining. In the midst of the place there is a vast tank of green water, so-called blessed or holy water. Recently the sanitary squad took the bodies of 119 babies from this tank and started asking a lot of questions, but the matter was soon hushed up. Most folks know the answers, but these have not been reported yet.

Hard by these twin towns of Hindu holiness is Muttra, one of the seven sacred cities of India where the orthodox worship fire and feed their dead to turtles. Vile moss-grown turtles. Man-eating turtles. Turtles that feast on human flesh every evening.

For colourful pagan spectacle few sights equal the nightly worship of the fires on the banks of the Jumna as it sweeps in a wide crescent between two of India's most famed Mohammedan cities—Delhi and Agra. Yet few tourists ever stop at Muttra. Motorists shudder at thought of driving through the twisting cattle paths called streets or sleeping in a dak bungalow, because there is no hotel.

Several times in my visit I almost ran over people sound asleep in the middle of the road. Many times we did run over piles of dried fish, bananas, tiny potatoes, dried beans or greasy candies piled at the edge of people's shops. At least twenty times we were hung up by holy heifers who had no hope of getting out of our way except to walk into somebody's house. This they eventually did.

After a dozen or so fights with a dozen or so merchants, we reached the Jumna where a solid wedge of people made it impossible to move farther. Darkness had come and hundreds of women ran about with tiny toy boats filled with oil. The idea was to buy two of these

boats, light the oil from a sacred lamp in the temple and set them adrift on the river. If the boats floated along side by side you got your wish; if they drifted apart you lost.

We chose to watch the worship from a raft in the river. Mosquitoes made this a painful experience but one soon forgot that discomfort because the scenes on shore were so fantastic and so uproarious.

A group of four temples had long rows of steps leading down to the river. At the bottom an idol was roped into a boat. On the steps, shouting, waving and shrieking at the idol were men and women, black bulls and white cows and hundreds of insolent and amorous monkeys. The water beneath these steps was aswarm with turtles. Huge craggy turtles with phosphorescent moss on their backs which gleamed ghostlike in the dusk. You could see practically no water; all was turtles. The big reptiles were jammed solid against the steps and from time to time as a foot or hand came too near they snapped for it hungrily, menacingly.

Turtles milled around our boat and the boats of others which contained many women anxious to set their little oil lamps adrift on the water. Many were afraid to put their hands down for fear of having them snapped off. Others, more brave, set their little fires afloat but the turtles knew that these little lights meant oil and turtles enjoy oil as both food and drink. So nobody had a chance to see whether their luck was in or out. The turtles just gulped and the lights disappeared, and that was the finish of that.

We drifted with the current below the railway bridge. There, on the bank, some corpses sizzled and spluttered on inadequate fires. Nobody really wanted the corpses burned at all but they went through the motions and obeyed the conventions. But at the slightest excuse, absence of wood or too low a blaze or too high a wind,

the fire was quenched and the body carted over to the water's edge where turtles milled.

Although there was every opportunity for these big snappers to come out of the water and seize bodies lying at the edge they never did; they waited in ghoulish patience. Soon the bodies were thrown in and the big moss-backed brutes tore the things apart and swam away with what they could get. One passed us with a whole lower leg grasped firmly in its mouth but didn't get far before other turtles were fighting for a share and pulling the flesh from the bone.

Above the bridge bells began to clang in noisy crescendo, so we paddled up again and watched the priest, a cocky fat fellow in a yellow robe, light a sacred oil vat of 108 holes. This itself, while picturesque from the water front, was a dull anticlimax compared with the rush of pilgrims to light their own lamps from the holy flame in the centre. They trampled each other in frenzied zeal to be within the 108 who first got lights, and many were hurt.

We crossed that same bridge in the morning *en route* to Imperial Delhi, unluckiest city in the world, but were so occupied we didn't have time to watch more turtles devour more men. The technique of crossing the Jumna bridge at Muttra is interesting.

Railway trains, buses, bullock carts, camel caravans, donkey gangs and casual pedestrians carrying anything from a stuffed tiger to a sackful of ducks use this same bridge at the same time and the big trick in a car is to ride the ties without getting a kink in the neck. If the mail train is coming, however, everything must stand aside and it was our luck to try a crossing when the mail was due.

Two big gates, one at each end, were firmly locked and the keys given to the police. This locked cars, bulls, caravans and buses inside the bridge but only briefly.

Police made provision for getting everybody off the bridge without letting anybody on it. When this was done they signalled down the track that the bridge was clear. Then the train got a green light; if it was there, it proceeded across. If it was not there, traffic stagnated until it came. This seldom takes more than two or three hours; a merely nominal delay in India traffic.

The gate on one side is then opened and traffic can follow the train across. The police ride over on the engine and at the far side open that gate. Two streams of traffic now meet in a maelstrom of cursing drivers, and while attempting to untangle itself some of its beasts and half of its drivers decide this is a fruitless way to spend life and curl up for sleep. Camels are the hardest things to waken once they go to sleep on a bridge, but donkeys are a bang-up second.

We managed to get across in forty-three minutes which is almost a record, then we rumbled methodically onward toward the capital. A half moon had come out as the first lights of Imperial Delhi twinkled far up the road. The headlights of our car gleamed back at us in pink firelights from the eyes of monkeys which littered the Muttra road and we were frequently pushed into the ditch by tinkling caravans of bullock carts, southbound with newly harvested grain, their drivers either fast asleep, gloriously drunk or not on the carts at all.

About a quarter of India's traffic jingles through the night with no guiding hand whatever. We sometimes stopped, turned a couple of teams around and sent them obediently back toward Delhi, just to get even with them for crowding us into the ditch.

A storm blew up as we rode in on the imperial city, which was athunder with drums as the Mohammedans celebrated Muharram, their national week of mourning. Crowds squeezed us into the by-paths and out of the way

and beggars clawed us for cash while muezzins chanted their fatalistic calls from the mosques.

Next day with Bishop John Robinson, who was having a last look at India after giving up his forty-three years of ministry and returning to Ohio, I went sightseeing.

We drove out toward the Chamber of Princes through India's lavish war memorial, biggest in the world, and swung over to the Kutb Minar, the highest stone shaft in Asia. In the bold days of the mighty Moguls, this was to have been one of the four minarets of the biggest mosque in the world, but the builder died when the second one was barely started. Mohammedan superstition puts the dread of disaster on the head of any man who finishes a dead creator's work, so the great mosque-to-be had fallen into decay even before savage hordes swept down on the Delhi of that day and wiped it from the earth, as Gandhi says they will wipe out the present Delhi.

This was Friday, the Mohammedan holy day, this an authentic Mohammedan memorial and this the Mohammedan week of public grief; yet the place was aswarm with Hindus from the outer villages, wearing their finest and most brilliant togs.

In the background of this moving panorama of tinkling bangles and lavish costumes, the Mohammedans, all wearing white for mourning, sulked and pouted. Who were they to be crowded out of their own mosques by infidel Hindus? . . . And women, at that! The bishop said this sulkiness was a forerunner of trouble.

He knew what he was talking about, because by noon the next day 50 Hindu corpses were ready for the burning ghats and India's oldest feud was ablaze again as Moslems and Hindus clashed. In fact, ten of the Hindu corpses didn't need a trip to the funeral pyres at all. Those bodies were mute result of a young Hindu tossing a brick at a Mohammedan procession and conking

a flag-waver on the skull. The boy was instantly slaughtered, whereupon terrified Hindus ran crying for cover. Outraged Mohammedans took after them and when a group of ten took shelter in a doctor's house, the Mohammedans calmly set fire to the place and burned the occupants to cinders.

This peaceful Friday, however, the Kutb Minar was focal point for an ever-growing army of village sight-seers and the bishop and I had a field day with cameras.

In the courtyard there were a few idols of sexual significance and an iron shaft avowedly endowed with magic charms. Legend says that any man or woman who can reach his arms around this shaft backward will have any wish he ever makes, be it the instant gift of a millions dollars or everlasting life.

Hundreds came and tried, while we watched, and several with sinewy gorilla arms made the span, but we white fellows were puny failures and couldn't come within six inches of completing the loop.

We did, however, climb the 990 steps to the top of the tower and looked over the heat-baked plains of Hindustan. Near the top of the shaft we ran into a traffic jam when Hindu husbands, heading their personal parades of ripe-smelling wives, started down as we went up. The instant the wives caught sight of us, they started whimpering like frightened babies. Some dropped in terror to the grooved steps, others ran helter-skelter back to the top as if to throw themselves over, and all covered their faces with fold after fold of scarlet or golden silk so that we could not see them.

As we kept climbing higher and higher, the shrieks mounted into a chorus of wails, as though we were about to disembowel half of them there and then.

To relax this situation a shaggy gorilla of a man, naked except for a diamond-shaped diaper, made a little speech to the women, in which he explained that we had

no evil designs on their virtue. Then he made a little speech to us, in which he said the only other white folks these village belles had seen were soldiers so they were naturally apprehensive.

By nightfall, the hullabaloo had increased as rival religions paraded the bazaars presumably to shout the praises of their respective gods, but actually to shriek insults at each other.

White folks cautiously kept away from the battle ground. Many, in fact, took to the hills of Mussoorie and Landaur, which are the largest American settlements in all India, for the week-end.

I decided to go up there with E. M. Moffatt whom we left in the preceding chapter taking the road to Udaipur. We had been on the road an hour or so when a handsome game warden waved the car to a stop and warned us of elephants ahead.

"Elephants!"

"Yes, sahib."

"How many elephants?"

"Six. Three are on the road now—another three in the jungle."

We decided to go on for one mile and in that mile the road changed from a paved highway through farmland and plain to a gravel path through damp, lush jungle. Normally, jungle indicates a bit of neglected tangle of bush and hillock with low stunted trees and craggy ant-hills. This, however, was the jungle you read about in Tarzan books—giant trees festooned with creepers, underbrush so thick that no man could move through it without knives and axes, bloodthirsty beasts and all the trimmings.

Ahead we could see the elephants on the road, but there were steel cages and men on their backs so we knew they weren't wild and came up with them. As we did we ran between long lines of beaters looking scared and

nervously fingering sticks the size and shape of broom handles.

It turned out that a wealthy Englishman, having bought exclusive permission to shoot over this plateau, had gone into the jungle with beaters, but missed his tiger time after time. So he sent to Lucknow, twelve days' elephant march away, and brought up a half-dozen tuskers to shoot from. Then he and his eighty beaters went crashing through the tangle of thorn and vegetation, where they managed to put a tiger at bay, but the hunter only wounded it and the great beast slunk away into the tangle.

His beaters, knowing that pursuit of a wounded tiger meant death for at least one of their number, struck. The hunter, armed with express rifles and explosive bullets, howled insults at them from his tiger-proof shack built in a tree. Hadn't this thing already cost him four hundred dollars? Weren't each of these men being paid twenty cents a day for their work? Weren't they promised an extra nickel apiece if he got his tiger? It was preposterous! He'd have them gaoled and flogged and exiled. He wouldn't stand such treatment from coolies. But the beaters, who had wives and children at home refused to go on and face a tiger, a wounded tiger, on his own level without guns, knives or pistols.

The hunter, therefore, climbed on an elephant by way of a stepladder, had another elephant travel with him on either side and came out to the road, where we met him. He was a rather flustered optimist who had brought with him, besides a Lucknow photographer to enshrine his marksmanship in print, a noted taxidermist. Since he had six elephants with him, but no shooting companions, I asked if we might go along and ferret out his wounded beast but he snorted a curt refusal and rolled down the ghat in a high-powered car to get breakfast and more beaters.

The beaters proved hard to get, whereupon he appealed to the government for road workers, and these luckless slaves, told to hunt for the sahib or lose their dollar-a-week jobs, had agreed to go singing through the jungle in an effort to drive that tiger into gun range for the Englishman. I'm pleased to report that after two days of howling about the jungle, nothing happened; no coolies were hurt and no tiger sighted.

We stopped at Dehra Dun and paid a dollar for the worst breakfast I ever tasted within living memory, then rolled along to Rajpur where soldiers guarded a gate into the mountains. We could see the lower Himalayas from there and when the gate opened we started to climb, a mile and a half within 14 miles.

From time to time we caught glimpses of a footpath up which coolies struggled with appalling loads and down which pony caravans came tinkling musically. A woman once climbed these steep 10 miles (the road is 14 but the path only 10), carrying a piano on her head and a baby on her back to win a bet.

After an hour, we came to Sunnyview, over a mile up. It rained, a gentle, wintry rain. It was icy cold. That rain was bound some day to be holy water. If it fell on one side of the hill it trickled down to mother Ganges. On the other side it took a more direct course to the sacred Jumna, and since the Jumna joins the Ganges, it was right back where it would have been, anyhow.

Just now, in the rain, pathetic lines of half-starved coolies waited to do our carrying, because there was still the steepest three miles to go to the rooftop. For forty cents a man would lug you up on his back; for twenty-five cents four of them would push you up in a rickshaw, and for twenty cents two of them would pick you up in a dandy, a rig that looked like a hammock with arthritis, and carry you up.

Moffatt and I decided to walk. For a nickel each we sent one man on ahead with our two bed rolls.

"A nickel!" I protested. "You can't pay a man a nickel to carry a bed up a mountain!"

"Certainly; that's all he expects. Those two beds wouldn't weigh over seventy-five pounds. He won't even feel them," Moffatt said.

By the time I'd climbed those three miles I was ready to give the coolie five dollars. I was all in. The coolie, however, was blandly sitting on the steps of Woodstock School, and took his two nickels with a bow and a grin. He'd beaten us by twenty minutes and was delighted with his fee and got in an early application for the downward journey.

That hill station proved to be the nearest thing to America I'd ever seen in the Orient and it was a fair bet that anyone we met would be from *our* part of the world and would have an interesting story to tell.

I had a field day of climbing and talking and was amazed at one house where we stopped to be given a report on child marriage which showed them on the increase by 100 per cent every year for the past ten years!

The report was by W. G. Lacey of Patna University and bore out what Sarda, the disillusioned diplomat, had told me in Ajmer.

In Darbhanga district, Bihar, the 1921 census showed 15,906 wives under the age of five years. The 1931 census shows 34,779 younger than five, and since that year the number has grown higher and higher until it is now the highest in all India.

Among boys the actual number is far short of that for girls, but the relative increase is equally striking and equally without explanation.

Within the next few months the government of India will combine the present provinces of Bihar and Orissa

for purposes of administration. This is what caused Lacey to start scratching his head. In Bihar more than half the girls of fifteen are widows! In Orissa, the adjoining province, practically nobody is married by that age. Lacey has been trying to find out the reasons and admits himself stumped. Says he:

One might expect that in Orissa, where the population is almost exclusively Hindoo and where Hindooism is more orthodox than in any other part of the province, early marriage would be particularly prevalent. But the facts are exactly the reverse. Even after the age of puberty the proportion of unmarried women (317 per 1,000) is more than twice as high as it is in the rest of the province. But in the advanced age periods, among persons aged 60 and over, a spinster in Orissa is just as difficult to find as she is in Bihar, while elderly bachelors are much more uncommon there than anywhere else.

If one were guided by religion, one would certainly expect to find that the proportion of girl-wives and boy-husbands was far lower among the Moslem population as a whole than among the Hindoo population; but even this expectation is falsified. Among Hindoos, 51 girls in every 1,000 below the age of five are either married or widowed; among Moslems the corresponding number is 80.

Between the ages of five and ten the proportion of Hindoo wives or widows is 290 per 1,000, while the Moslem proportion is 342. At first sight, therefore, you are asked to believe that infant marriage is practised more commonly by Moslems than Hindoos, but in acual fact it is not necessary to impose so great a strain on your credulity.

The reason why there are relatively more married infants in the Moslem population than in Hindoo population is that the great majority of Moslems are to be found in localities where the custom of early marriage is more or less universal.

Lacey points out that only one town in the entire province, Chota Nagpur, showed a decline in either child wives or child widows during the ten years. The average

increase was appallingly high. For instance, "In 1921 only nine boys out of every 1,000 under the age of ten were married. Now there are 37 [in Chota Nagpur]. Among the girls the proportion has jumped from 13 to 57."

Not only are there more baby brides in Bihar than in Orissa but 20 per cent more widows at all ages and, in case it proves something important, in Bihar where ten is a fair age for marriage the birth rate is much lower than in Orissa where twenty is a more acceptable age. In both places you'd have to go on the prowl with an armed guard and a fine tooth comb to produce a maid or bachelor over the age of thirty-five.

Of girls in their teens six out of ten are widows forbidden for all time to remarry! Now, in a mild way, the 25,496,660 widows of India have revolted against this absurdity and formed an association for the promotion of widow remarriage. The most puzzling yet gratifying effect of the organization during the first two years is not the fact that out of twenty-five millions 2,414 women came forward and said they'd like to marry again, but that 2,716 men, up to January 15th, 1936, announced themselves ready and willing to risk being driven from their temples and deprived of their caste and their happiness in the life to come by marrying widows.

M. C. Mohan, who not only runs this revolutionary club but prints *The Widow's Cause*, its official organ in which candidates are biologically and biographically listed, is delighted with progress. In 1914, he told me, there were 23,568,908 widows in India, not a single one of whom remarried. But the war came along and the war seemed to smash up a lot of old traditions. Anyhow in 1915 a dozen Indian girls, all in their teens, took the plunge for the second time. Five of these were later murdered.

Ten years passed and 1925 showed 2,663 widows remarried; by 1931 over 5,000 had gone to the altar a second time and this year he expects the total to reach 7,000. This, out of a total population of 322,000,000 people, is something less than the food value of a boiled brick yet the widow leaguers are jubilant.

To be sure, few of these remarriages are considered legal. The woman has no financial claim on her husband for support or inheritance from his estate, if any. Her children are listed as illegitimate, she is put down as outcaste, but what of it?

As a casual observer, what puzzles me most about this widow remarriage ban is the men. India has far more men than women. Millions of men have several wives each. That means that other millions have none whatever. Yet out of 25,496,660 widows more than 7,000,000 are under thirty-five and the boys don't step up and grab them. Figures show that a pregnant widow has three times more chance of remarriage than one who is not facing motherhood.

By the time I'd jotted down all these figures and met enough people to organize a political party it had grown dark and the winds were cold, so I hiked back to the school where the six-year-old boys were being put to bed. I thought it pathetic to see little gaffers hardly able to dress themselves spending six months at a boarding-school alone.

The lads didn't seem to mind, though. One, hearing that I'd recently come from America, wanted to know if I'd seen his mother, and a lean little Hindu boy, who turned out to be heir apparent to a state throne, came along and said, "Please, sir, I don't know what to do."

"You don't know what to do?"

"Yes."

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, I don't know what to do."

"What seems to be the trouble?"

"I don't have a shirt."

"You don't have a shirt?"

"Yes."

This "yes" answer where you would expect a "no" was puzzling but as you see in reading it over the boy was perfectly right. The matron got him a shirt and the boys were all hurried into a back room for prayers.

This little Hindu, another Hindu, and a Sikh boy who looked all wrong with his long black hair done up in a bun, wouldn't say prayers. They said they didn't believe in prayers. All the white six-year-olds attempted to prove how prayer got you all sorts of nice things, but this argument was firmly met by the Hindu's jeering demand: "Let me see you get some firecrackers or biscuits, or even some new marbles."

The boys dropped theology just there to ask if I knew any stories.

"Sure."

"Do you know Jack the Giant-Killer?"

"Boys, I'm the best Jack the Giant-Killer man in all India . . . listen." We were off. I had a swell time. I never will forget the look of rapt attention on the face of that stoical little Sikh.

We slept that night in the hostel. It poured rain and the wind moaned. I expected in the morning to find the place festooned with icicles, but instead I was wakened by the boys jumping into a swimming pool about eight degrees colder than a cobra's eye. How these young spartans ever did it is beyond me.

Moffatt and I ate enough breakfast for a corporal's guard, then started the eight-mile trek toward Rajpur. We thought that by cutting through the jungle we'd save a mile or so but only managed to get lost in a river bed.

This part of the country was feeding ground for panther and leopard, so it would be exciting to report that during the time we were lost leopards stalked us. They didn't though and the most exciting thing we saw all the way back to Delhi was a battle between a pack of pariah dogs and a flock of vultures over the carcass of a calf.

Chapter XIV

Love Goes to Prison

ADVENTURE, the experts say, is where you find it and, because I could not sleep that first afternoon back in Delhi the imperial capital provided an adventure with a mad dog that gnawed a human skull, and a lunch with a man who'd held the strangest job in the strangest prison in Asia. He was official marriage arranger in the Andaman Islands, India's outpost of exile in the Bay of Bengal.

The mercury had climbed to 108 and showed every symptom of breaking through the glass when I sprawled into bed and two hours later, stewing in my own perspiration, I gave up the thought of sleep as myna birds outside the window preached thunderous sermons and women with sledge hammers started knocking the hotel down so it could be made bigger for the winter season.

I climbed into the car and drove out through the ruins of an earlier Delhi to the Jumna determined to escape some of the heat. The river was almost deserted except for a herd of water buffalo which lay with only their noses above water.

The river-bank barbers and caste-smearers slept under fluttering prayer flags. A yogi chained by one leg hung head down from a banyan tree. Another was playfully biting himself with the polished skull of a tiger. Some boys washed goats at the foot of the steps leading into the sacred stream.

Remembering the uproar that followed my plunge into the Ganges years before, I took it easy here and just sat in the water for a bit to see if anybody was going to

make a row. Nobody paid much attention although some turtles looked me over with arrogant eyes. I swam to a small island and back a couple of times, landing once at the women's ghat. Some widows were there chanting mournfully but they never bothered me.

I dressed and sauntered south toward the Calcutta road feeling cooler. The path led into a dusty field which smelled bad and I was surprised to find 20 or 30 dogs there. They were evil-looking, quarrelsome dogs and one snapped viciously at my legs. I turned on him and he stood growling over a large bone. Then he advanced toward me as if to spring and I saw that the bone was a human skull. I stepped back into the dying embers of a fire and the dog followed growling fiercely. A man, his face painted the bright red of a fire reel, came out of a shack with a long bamboo pole and drove the dog back. Then he picked up the skull and put it in the fire. The dog jumped in and pulled it out again.

I was in the burning ghats. All around me then I saw the cold remains of funeral fires. From some the light wood ash had blown away so thoroughly yet gently that the bones of the victim lay there anatomatically perfect and complete in spite of the awful heat they'd been through.

I backed up toward the river again and found three other dogs gnawing bones which they had plucked from fires at the cost of nasty burns on their faces. Other dogs, incredibly foul, surrounded me, growling as if determined to pull me to shreds. The man with the red face drove them away again.

Then about 50 men marched in carrying a dead woman wrapped in a yellow turban. They were howling a responsive song something like: "What's the matter with this dead girl?" "She all right!"

"Why is she all right?" "Because she'll soon be born again."

Then the chorus seemed to say: "Her troubles are over; she'll soon be a man." The boys had something to say about how nice it was to be a man.

They set the body on the ground and the dogs all gathered around but were driven away with sticks and stones. Something was written by the man with the red face, then some small boys carried the corpse into the river where the turban shroud was unwound and the dead woman washed in the sacred waters and covered with rose petals. The boys brought her up again, then worked industriously getting the bangles off her wrists and ankles, rings from her nose and ears, and toe guards from her feet. A man broke all the fingers to get the wristlets off.

A male body was marched in then, but the ceremony for him was much more elaborate and gruesome. He was an old man and they put him on the ground beside a shrine where his sons and grandsons leaned over him and whispered that he'd been a fine man and they were awfully sorry he was dead and they'd be glad to see him when he came back again.

I went away before they started either fire and had to pick a zig-zag course out to the road or else walk over bones which fell to powder if I touched them. Near the road there was a yogi laughing and smoking a hooka pipe. I had a camera and wanted a picture of this laughing guru because you always see these birds looking groggy and half tight in pictures, but the instant my lens was ready this fellow went into his sour dreamy-eyed reverie so the picture was just the same old thing.

The pathway to the hotel was lined with white nicotine plants and now evening had come making these fragrant and appealing. It was a great relief from the smell of the ghats. I took a spin along the broad boulevards and wound up at the pictures. There was an English comedy on but I haven't yet seen a really funny

English comedy, so I got back in the car to go somewhere else.

Then out of the show there walked a tall blonde girl in a white lace dress and big fat smile. She came right over to the car, opened the door, stepped in and said, "Hello, sport."

I got all red because I knew things like this just don't happen in India. Cobras might get into your bed and tigers defy you to run over them, but pretty white girls simply don't make passes at perfect strangers in India.

I said hello and the girl said, "Where do we go?"

"Well, the fact is . . ."

"Okay, sport," she interrupted, "I only wanted a drink." She got out and walked up the street still smiling and looking very pretty and I put myself away as a hell of a poor Lochinvar and was tempted to chase after her but didn't.

Later that evening I was reading of an exciting debate in the Chamber of Princes, no less, concerning an insult to a cow or a bull or maybe both, I don't remember.

It all started when a holy heifer wandered into the garden of a wealthy Delhi Mohammedan and ate up his wife's flowers, then roamed into the kitchen and ate her lunch. In tears, she summoned her husband and he in a rage called the police, making it very definite that he wanted a Mohammedan cop. When this fellow arrived the Brahmanee bull was booted out and the infuriated house-owner took steps.

First he had a census made of all the temple bulls in his area. There were 82 entitled to wander in and out of houses, banks, gardens or shops and eat whatever took their fancy. This is a sacred bull's right by temple law. No man dare prevent him.

But this man had had enough of it. He thought India's capital city had finally reached a state where it was needless, worthless and silly to have cattle crowding

people off the main streets. He went around with a subscription list, raised twenty thousand dollars and told the Hindu community he was prepared there and then to erect a first-class stable and to feed and shelter their holy cattle in that stable from now until doomsday if they'd just keep them off the streets. If not off the streets, then off the main streets.

The Hindus refused. Cows, they said, were their mothers. They were sacred and holy. His majesty the King-Emperor, by treaty, agreed that they were sacred. They would not have them locked up under any condition because that was an indignity no loyal son would thrust on his mother. So the Mohammedan started to give his twenty thousand dollars back, but the people didn't want it. They told him to keep on trying and perhaps he'd think of something else.

Enter at this stage the smart lawyer. He said the cattle were legally permitted all the rights of a human being, but no more. They could wander at large in any public park, street or playground, but they had no right to step foot on private ground. Jubilantly the lawyer went around with a police squad demanding the arrest of holy heifers as trespassers. They were duly pinched and soberly brought to court. A white magistrate presided and sentenced each cow or bull to two years' hard labour. The holy beasts were led away, saddled or yoked, and put to work watering roads, cutting grass or whatnot.

Hindus yelled fake and cheat. They summoned maharajahs from distant fields and demanded the instant release of their bovine mothers. So far, they have got nowhere. The debate alternately rages and dies away again. But, in the meantime, other cities have rounded up Brahmanee bulls, too, solemnly stood them before a magistrate, heard the evidence against them and sentenced them to gaol. Up to now there have been no

acquittals and no appeals and the bullocks are being banished like many an insurgent Hindu.

A more unique task than condemning holy cattle to hard labour is that of being matchmaker in a penitentiary. At lunch in a mission bungalow one day I met the man who held such a post on the Andaman Islands for many a year. The fact that I had just recently been on Devil's Island started us compiling a long list of comparisons.

In Devil's Island, accursed French penal colony off South America's muddy coast line, a hundred or more married convicts live with their own wives and their own children in their own homes. They don't wear stripes or other prison gear, have no gaol jobs to do and only the most routine of reporting to the wardens. Yet they are convicts, not ex-convicts.

In the Andaman Islands—the Devil's Island of the Far East—more than 1,000 prison love affairs have bloomed into marriage within the last five years.

They stopped sending female convicts to Devil's Island 20 years ago, and now there are less than 50 in the whole place; but in the Andamans, which rise in the middle of the storm-swept Bay of Bengal, they still send them by the boatload. And when male convicts locked up for life meet female convicts out for 15 years, what happens? Do they have to pine for each other and go into a sleepless decline while staring through steel bars hoping for an acquaintance?

They do not. They are encouraged to meet and marry and the man I dined with that night was the official encourager.

Just now there are about 7,000 convicts in the Andamans, of whom, roughly, 5,100 are men from all parts of India. Great bearded giants from the golden glens of Baluchistan work side by side with silky-faced pansies from the Burmese lowlands. Afridi raiders from Khyber's murder belt share corridors with shrunken little

idealists from the South, whose only crime has been passionate shrieking for an independent India.

But the heart interest and news interest is in the women. Nearly 2,000 of these are on the islands now. Thieves and killers and mixers of poison brew; a few bomb-tossers, several coy Assamese convicted of killing the brains and later the bodies of white lovers to prevent their return to the homeland. There are several black-toothed Kachin women from the mountains of Upper Burma, where head hunting is still an active art, and a few horse-faced tribal matriarchs who were too quick on the trigger and too accurate on the sights to please the powers.

One highly intelligent group consists entirely of young university women. Four years ago they pledged themselves into a blood sorority aimed toward the expulsion of the British from Bengal and managed, before they were rounded up, to kill dozens of officials. Had their aim been steadier they would have killed two governors. These girls are now the prize packets in the weekly parade of love.

This procession is something you will not see on any other island in the world. It comes off Thursday evening because Thursday is not holy to Hindu, Mohammedan, Sikh, Pathan, Christian or Buddhist. Five thousand rough-and-ready Indian convicts are started walking, leisurely, in one direction. From the other come the women—about 2,000 of these. As they pass the boys and girls can ogle and flirt and make signs, but no talking in the ranks. Not a sound. If they see something they would love to have and to hold they approach the official fixer-upper. The first problem is to identify their light of love. They don't know her name; she wears no number and no distinctive dress.

But desire overcomes such trifles as identity, and the girl is looked up in records. Generally by the time she

gets to the Andamans she is engaged to marry, the engagement having been arranged by her parents at home. To these goes a letter explaining that a fellow prisoner is keen to marry their daughter, and what do the parents think about that for an idea. The parents are generally quite agreeable or else they are pretty mad about things and don't even answer the letter.

Meantime, of course, the weekly parades are still going on, and there is only one mailboat to and from the Andamans a month, so that many another young blood has spotted the same girl and felt his heart go bumpety-bump before the letter gets back. This is where the official marriage arranger has to use all his tact. He didn't tell me just how it was done but he generally manages somehow or other to keep everybody happy, which predicts for him a great future in politics.

"Do your prisoners generally marry within their own religion and caste?" I asked.

"No," he said. "That's one of the most interesting things. Once a man gets sent out to the Andamans for life he seems to forget both religion and caste.

"I was sort of fairy godfather to more than 300 convict weddings lately and practically all of them were out of caste and out of tribe," the fixer continued. "Slim little Burmese girls were often chosen by high-headed Punjabi raiders, while some of the smallest men, Gurkhas for instance, often wanted big Sikh or Afghan women."

"Are the girls always agreeable?"

"No; particularly the women of the North. They're almost untamable, surly and vicious. The light of hatred never leaves their eyes."

"And what about a man who has a wife back home . . . if he's out on the islands for life can he pick another?"

"Oh yes; back home he may have up to four. If he wants another on the islands, and everything is agree-

able, he has what he wants." This is a piker's trick, however, because there are not nearly enough women to go around.

On the Andamans, as on Devil's Island, all convicts, men and women, are paid for their work. Likewise they are fed, so far as their religion permits, the same food as native troops eat. The main difference is one of colour. In the Andamans there are no white convicts; in Devil's Island there are thousands.

In the Andamans a convict, once he has served his time, is free to go home or anywhere else he likes. On Devil's Island a man, unless sent out for five years or less, is doomed to remain on the island for ever after, eking out an existence as a libéreré. As it turns out, however, not 5 per cent of Andaman prisoners ever go back to their homes. They get to know the place; they find jobs, raise families and take to farming back in the hills which are fruitful of soil and invigorating of climate.

Just now there are 7,000 people on the island who were born and raised there, the offspring of convicts. These are a strange new race of people; bigger than the southern Hindu, darker than the mountain raider, wiry as a Nepalese knife thrower. The total population of these islands is about 16,000 of whom 7,000 are prisoners, 7,000 their children and 2,000 in a wild pagan tribe living in the high mountains.

On a percentage basis, strangely enough, women escape twice as fast and twice as easily as men do. My friend the marriage arranger was also magistrate on the place. He said prisoner for prisoner women got into twice as many fights on the island as men did. The explanation for both is sex appeal. On the mainland of this amazing country women rate lower than the Boston Braves. They are disgraced and outlawed if they don't produce sons, outcaste if their husbands die, and if they live compelled to wait on them hand and foot.

But on the islands where women are scarce all this high and mighty rigmarole is chucked overboard and women are sought as companions and sweethearts. Fishermen, who are not allowed near the islands, frequently risk their skins to help a girl off but in such case she does not get back to her own folks but suffers that so-called fate worse than death. Precisely the opposite sort of gaol is that in Patiala, ace native state of the North, and homeland of His Highness the Maharajah of Patiala, chieftain of all the Sikhs and chairman of the Chamber of Princes.

That gaol has 1,200 prisoners and only one guard! Yet the place is overrun with border raiders doing life for murder, by bandits who looted the caravans coming in from the east, by robber barons and highwaymen. The place is a vast and well-run prison farm where the convicts patter about in white nightgowns wearing such enlightening labels as "Robbery, 15 years"; "Assault, two months"; "Murder, life." It's cheery, like a Rotary club, where you know everybody by the gadgets they wear.

But the guards? Twelve hundred prisoners and only one guard! You want to know how that works out? Some of these convicts are Pathans, the toughest on earth. How do they tolerate restraint without a machine-gun pointed at their throats? Well, the boys select their own guards. They vote for them twice a year. They are entitled to vote for any man who has been cooped up for a year or longer with a good conduct record and friends outside. If this chap wins the election or re-election his friends outside the walls have to put up bonds for him just as if he were on bail pending a trial. Then if any convicts in his particular batch escape he, the guard, is fined and punished. If he himself makes a break the family outside lose their bail money and are sometimes sent to the dungeons themselves. If a guard escapes,

which seldom happens, human bloodhounds, enrolled with the secret police, streak after him and when they bring him back he gets the lash—not with a cat-'o-nine-tails, but with a chain!

"Do you pay the guards?" I had asked during a hurried visit.

"Oh, yes; they get a dollar a week and better quarters to live in but we don't allow them out."

Not all convicts in the Patiala prison work on the farm. Some weave rugs, cut sandals or sew mailbags. Frequently these are chained at their work. I remember seeing one man bound up with a sign around his neck, "Assault, one day."

"One day?" I asked the governor. "Is that right?"

"Yes, he is a policeman. He got into a fuss last week, was tried this morning and here he is until to-morrow."

"What kind of fuss?"

"Oh, it has to do with mesmerism and magic and the casting of spells from an evil eye. When we get into the office I'll show you the papers."

The cop, it turned out, was Inspector Abdul Raman, and his infant son had been terribly ill. He was convinced that a sorceress of the bazaar, a story-teller and weaver of charms, had put an evil spell on his son. Her name was Babial and the inspector sent for her.

"Babial," the report went on, "disregarded several calls and eventually was beaten and brought forcibly to the police station with her daughter, Sandhar Pankhi. Meantime the inspector's child died. He blamed the woman for casting a spell and threatened to shoot her. Two low-caste men were then sent for and these poured sewer water into the woman's mouth and cut her hair. The daughter was taken to the quarters of the head constable, stripped of her clothes and subjected to various indignities. Both women were then given a thrashing and sent away."

For doing that the inspector was given one day in the gaol.

Incidentally, they have amateur hangmen in Patiala and drape the victims up on a clothes-line. The hangman gets 10 per cent knocked off his sentence for a good job. One lad hanged so many brothers-in-crime that his seventeen years passed in ten months, but after he got out he killed a couple of people who called him names, so they brought him back and hanged him too.

Another official suffering the fidgets while awaiting his ordeal before civil service chieftains told me his troubles had started because an untouchable in his remote area had dared to build a house in a caste community.

Still another lonely wanderer in Delhi for orders had not seen another white face except his wife's for six years. He was Minnesota born of Scandinavian parents and during his six years in the Kachin country of Upper Burma had practically forgotten all his English. His wife, who stuck it out for four years before going mad, had spoken Norwegian to him and most of his mail was in that tongue. When his wife had to be taken away he went part way through the jungle with her, then turned back to his little band of superstitious wild men and stuck it out for two years without seeing another white creature.

One of this man's jobs, for years, had been the buying and freeing of slaves, but this was given up in 1930 because of the expense and futility of going further.

"In nineteen-twenty-nine," he told me, "I went into the Hukong Valley and bought 357 slaves of both sexes and all ages, transplanted them south and set them free in quarters prepared for them near the village of Kamaing, which was in organized territory. Within a week a third of them, in face of serious jungle perils, had gone back to their masters; within a month they were all back."

"You mean they actually preferred to remain slaves?"

"I certainly do—the same as many Southern negroes preferred to live in bondage."

Slaves in that country are the usual price of a bride. A free man will generally pay three slaves for a woman, but she, in turn, must present him with a dowry of one slave, generally a buxom black mamma whom he installs as a concubine.

"How many slaves are there in Upper Burma now?" I wondered.

"About 75,000, but don't, in speaking of slaves, get the Uncle Tom's Cabin sort of idea. They all get along rather well together and since women outnumber men up there it's quite common for a free woman to marry a male slave. In that case the children are all slaves, owned by the father's master, but the woman is free to go and come as she pleases. In the case of a free woman marrying a bonded man she can divorce him by appeal to his owner . . . It's all quite matey."

To meet charming people of such wide interests as these is routine stuff in Delhi.

Chapter XV

GHOSTS

IF there is any one thing in the world no Indian believes in, it is ghosts. He is one of the most superstitious creatures on earth but the supernatural leaves him cold. He believes a cow is his mother, a monkey or a snake his god. He believes that devils and hosts of evil, of whom he is in terror, are jealous of any good fortune he gets. Therefore he seldom admits to good fortune; let alone brags about it. He disguises his sons as girls and turns all his cash into gold or silver bangles or bracelets for his wives so that if devils come to take these treasures they will terrify the wives, not him.

But ghosts are no worry to the Indian. He is perfectly satisfied that he, his wife, his children and everyone he knows will one day die and come back to India as somebody or something else depending a lot on their own choice in the matter.

Therefore, if Ismail Khan, whom you saw dead and burned to a crisp last night, happens to walk into your bungalow and sit on the edge of the charpoy talking to you to-night, don't worry. That's not Ismail's ghost. THAT'S HIM!

Because the Indian does not believe in ghosts or haunted houses this chapter is a bit more puzzling. It is to me, anyhow, because I saw a ghost in an Indian haunted house!

I'd shared a dak (meaning mail) bungalow with an English state official one night, and since this chap had no car I asked if he'd like to push along with us in the morning.

"Perhaps to-morrow," he said casually. "I'm looking for a ghost . . . a proper Edgar Wallace ghost with rattling chains, a spectral shriek and all the doings. Would you like to take a hand?"

"But there are no ghosts! Who ever heard of an Indian ghost?"

"I did. This is a very special ghost and I'm going to a very special ceremony. It's called a puja, if you'd like to come."

"Sure, at midnight I suppose, with a full moon."

"Quite right; there is a full moon to-night and we leave here at eleven-thirty."

We didn't though. We left an hour earlier, went to a temple about an hour's ride away and sat on the roof listening to the wailing din of a temple band below while a Brahman, shouting at the top of his voice in order to be heard, told us about the ghost.

From a practical point of view the story was simple. The house this ghost was supposed to be haunting was a valuable and beautiful bungalow overlooking a nearby lake. It was a large, rambling place of white stone and had cost thousands of rupees, but no one could be persuaded to live there. Tenants said the place was haunted by spooks and evil messengers from the imps of darkness. The landlord, in desperation, had tried every means of getting rid of the so-called ghosts or of persuading people they were fakes and frauds and swindles.

New tenants came one after another hopeful of enjoying this beautiful bungalow for a low rent, but after a week or so they all packed up and vanished like the very ghosts they stood in terror of. Only the loss of revenue bothered the landlord; he didn't worry beyond the money stage.

Then a priest visiting the local temple said he was sure there must be a brother priest buried in or near the

building. Since no Hindu can rest peacefully in any grave whatever (they must all be burned), the torments that cause a dead priest to writhe in ghostly agonies were, supposedly, much worse.

We were now going to find the ghost, to capture him and to burn him so that happiness could return to him and leave him free to go back, or come back, to earth when and how he saw fit. We rumbled down a jungle road in my car and soon picked up the lake, but it took another half-hour to get around to where the house stood in weed-grown grounds.

The landlord, the ghost chaser, a helper, the district officer and myself made up the party—five of us. The landlord opened the gates to the compound but we were asked to leave the car outside and walk in. Our feet went crunch, crunch, crunch on the gravel. A shaft of white moonlight cut down through the banyans making the throttling branches from their overhead roots stand out like devilish armies. It was a perfect setting for any ghost story.

The ghost chaser now approached the building. He stood before the padlocked front door and sang out a series of commands. Something like: "Ghosts, attention! Clear off. Vanish from this place. Begone!"

This was all very imperative and impressive but it struck both the officer and me as the wrong procedure if the chaser was really out to capture and burn this spectral visitor. We couldn't get any explanations, however. Soon the chaser was satisfied that any gate-crashing ghosts, other than the specific spirit we had come to seek, would have gone, and the door was opened.

A burp of mildewed air came out and splashed in our faces. I shone a torch just to make sure there were no snakes but was instantly ordered to douse it. There were no snakes. No bats either; but the entrance to the staircase was tightly sewn up by spider webs. There was a

hole in the roof just over the staircase and through that a white beam of moonlight, like the shaft from an aerial searchlight, made a circle on the floor.

The chaser went to that, muttered some mumbo-jumbo in Urdu while his assistant drew a circle with a piece of chalk. A compass was set in that circle and seven paces stepped off in each of the cardinal points. The chaser sat in his circle and each of us other four sat in ours.

I was tempted to laugh all this off as a childish build-up to sideshow melodramatics but before I had a chance to get cynical the assistant ghost chaser brought a pile of twigs from under his long robe and set them on the floor. Then he unrolled his turban, took out more twigs and made another cone from them.

The boss chaser then started muttering again and sprinkled some grey powder—like fine sea sand—over the twigs. In about two minutes both cones burst into flame. It was a pale reddish flame. Like the colour of your own hand if you put a flashlight under it.

The flame didn't seem to be warm. It didn't seem to consume the twigs. It just burned. Then I noticed the smoke. It was white smoke and there seemed to be far too much of it, yet it never filled up the room, caused us to cough or wipe our eyes.

The priest talked to the smoke. He muttered and jabbered and occasionally sang. The smoke went higher. Still higher. Then the smoke from the two piles linked together. Now it was weaving like a dancer. It was about five feet high. This smoke was the ghost we had come to find.

"It is the spirit of a dead priest come to the sacred fires to be burned," the landlord said hopefully. I wasn't so sure, but certainly this was no ordinary pillar of smoke. We all watched in fascination. I was certain now that this flame—if it was a flame—was not consuming the

twigs but before I had a chance to get more dope the smoke dangled up and started toward the open door. We all followed. The smoke weaved and wiggled like a cooch dancer and started floating toward the lake. It came to the gateway of the compound which was still open, then drifted back, hesitated near the root of a tree and vanished.

This left all of us except the ghost chaser a bit limp with surprise. The chaser, however, was prepared for this. He picked up a long-handled shovel and started to dig furiously. Down about two feet he hit some bones and brought them up. They could have been any kind of bones for all we could tell, but soon he came up with a skull and there was no doubt that this was human.

Across the left temple was a brown gash. All the bones were now gathered together in a big pile and set on fire. The landlord sighed in relief, content that his troubles were all over. The ghost, he felt sure, was a holy Hindu dead these many many years, but buried instead of burned. In all these intervening years he had hovered in spirit over what of him had once been flesh, hoping that some devout follower of Brahma would find and burn him. Now they had done this and he was, presumably, content.

I don't necessarily believe this and can't strain the reader's credulity that far but the only explanation I could find were the ones set down here. If there are such things as ghosts in this intriguing world of ours, half a million of them must be hanging about Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's deserted suburb of Agra, home of the Taj Mahal.

To-night at sundown 10,000 blind men in one thousand Oriental cities will shout the name of Akbar the Great. Who's Akbar?

"He was the greatest Mogul emperor who ever ruled India; he built one of the most amazing cities in all the

world, but nobody ever lived in it . . . it is now a city of vanished spectres in which no living thing stirs after dark—his son built the Taj Mahal . . . he owned 2,000 elephants and 12,000 horses, he played checkers with nude slave girls instead of little black discs . . ."

"Skip the history, Sinclair, get down to the blind men. Why do only blind men shout the praises of Akbar; did he endow a blind man's school or something?"

"No. The blind men are muezzins. They are the fellows who go up into the highest minarets of mosques and call the Mohammedans to prayer. When they sing out they say 'Allah, Akbar,' and a lot of other things which mean: 'Akbar is great, but God is greater. There is only one God and he is Allah.' Then they go on about not being able to help yourself; what is written is written. Your fate is your fate and you can't change it, so don't worry. They have to be blind because no Mohammedan is supposed to look at another man's wife, but these fellows away up on towers can't help looking if they have eyes."

This mock conversation between me and myself drifted through my head that lazy day as I dozed in Akbar's crimson hall of dreams. Here, I recalled, there lived a simple little yogi with matted hair and misty eyes of whom there are three million now living in India. He dozed away his years beside a well and didn't move about much, so women brought him food and he thanked them, and all these women had babies. Lots of babies, which delights an Indian woman.

To the north, in Imperial Delhi, lived Akbar, king of kings and lion of the plains. He had three wives but no babies, and this upset him a lot and made him suspect himself of impotence. So Akbar the mighty came down with his wives and his elephants and all his royal court and asked this simple old man beside the country well to intercede with the gods so he could have a son.

And Akbar's number one wife soon bore him a son; then two daughters. So the great emperor, keeping a promise he made the simple little mystic, said that he would transfer his capital city to this spot beside the well.

Six square miles of walls were laid out and inside there rose the crimson cities of Fatehpur and Sikri. Amazing examples of wealth and splendour and town planning. Huge boulevards, unlike anything seen in India, were flanked by colossal palaces. The old mystic sitting by his well couldn't stand the racket of the builders so he died, and he, being Mohammedan, was buried in a tomb of carved and creamy marble.

Soon the builders began to die off by thousands, but the work pushed on and the last building put up was a million-dollar memorial over the little mystic's tomb. But death kept sniping away at these twin cities of the plains. Elephants died and cattle and camels perished. Lancers with sick horses brought their ailing beasts into the great mosque and prayed for the little saint to make them well again. He must have failed because the doorway to his burial ground is plastered with horseshoes presumably taken from the dead. And death marched on, relentlessly, pitilessly, energetically.

So Akbar and all his gorgeous court had to pack up their peacock thrones and desert his amazing city. It remains to-day a windswept ruin of forgotten dreams. I thought all this through in the shadow of Akbar's bedroom, while watching a strange procession of tired women go tinkling across the great checkerboard where slave girls once were pawns. They started for the little old mystic's tomb; when they got there they set up a great wailing which echoed down the streets of the ghosts. It sounded in the late afternoon like the agonized lament of tired souls; a mournful protest against the brevity of all human existence.

I strolled along behind the women and was joined by

a garrulous old man who had been stalking me with a predatory eye all day. He said he was a direct descendant of the little mystic who had caused this city to rise and wanted to explain the place to me. I kept saying no, I didn't want a guide, but when I mentioned the word guide he flew into a rage and started to pluck hairs from his beard. He said he was a saint and a famous man; not a guide. Well, it's not often a chap gets a chance to mingle with saints, so we strolled over to the tomb where the cries of anguish had sunk to low, choking whimpers.

Inside, clinging like bats to the white marble bars, the women were petitioning the long-dead mystic to give them sons. Their pleas were pathetic and sexually revealing but pretty poor testimonials for the aphrodisiacs they'd been using.

When they had done each woman tied a piece of coloured string to the old fellow's polished tomb and went away. As they came out I noticed they were Hindu, Mohammedan and Buddhist; all religions gathered together to pray to this little mystic of long ago. Two of the Mohammedans, who had their noses cut off to indicate domestic unfaithfulness, lingered to buy flowers and popcorn which they tossed on the red bed which sits suggestively beside the tomb.

I went inside and found thousands and thousands of coloured strings hanging from doors, ceilings, windows, walls. A new batch of son-wishers came trooping across the court but waited until I'd gone before singing out their plea.

"Will they all get sons?" I asked the descendant of the saint.

"All, yes, every one."

"You're quite sure?"

"Absolute. It is absolute. All, every one, will now have sons."

Rajputana—tigress shot by the Author and the Maharajah of Kotah it was credited with killing many women and in its stomach were found bangles and silver ornaments and the jagged top of a beer bottle

We make camp in the desert on the road to Udaipur

In the burning ghats at Delhi—a Sadhu, or yogi, at meditation

The wishing-post at the Kutb Minar in Old Delhi Childless wives come here to pray for sons, and legend says that any woman who can span the iron post backward will have her wish granted

"No daughters?"

"Never. Only sons. It can never fail."

In a neat row beside the main tomb were a dozen other marble coffins partly in and partly out of the ground.

"The next is for me," the garrulous guide said, non-committally. "I will be there." He seemed to accept his coming departure with complete tranquillity, yet he seemed no more certain of it than of his faith in the future motherhood of the young women whose ankle bangles still tinkled as they trooped down the hill. I sat there once more lost in daydreams.

The son Akbar had prayed so hopefully for and to honour whom he had built this magnificent but unlucky city had later tossed the old emperor in gaol and kept him there the last seven years of his life. It all seemed a rotten cheat and I was still thinking about cheats and cheaters when I rolled through the city walls into the healthier plains.

There a group of shepherds, up to their knees in water, were to be seen forcing gallons of it down the throats of their sheep. They poured the water through bamboo poles until the poor sheep were puffed out ready to blow up. Then they drove them to market, just a half-mile away, where they were sold by weight including, of course, the water. The buyers, being wise traders, knew exactly what had been done and fixed their price accordingly so the only losers were the sheep.

The sheep and Akbar. They both seemed to get a dirty deal and the more you look on that ever-changing, never-changing marvel of beauty, the Taj Mahal, the more you wonder how the man who caused its erection could be so ungrateful to his own father. He was so deeply grieved for his wife who died having her eighth baby that he buried her in a stone and silver sarcophagus which cost 20,000 men twenty years of work. But his

own father he chained up like a savage beast or a homicidal maniac.

Unluckily, the Taj Mahal is still a tomb of tragedy and many frustrated lovers are now using it as a place of suicide. So many death pacts have recently resulted in jumps from the highest minarets that doors are being installed to keep people from plunging to the jagged rocks of the Jumna far below. Most of these jumpers are educated Indian youths and maids compelled by parents to marry someone to whom they were betrothed in childhood, whom they have never seen or written to.

The Taj, even as a lure to people bent on their own destruction, is still the most beautiful building in the world, no matter how or when you look at it. I saw it that night in the midst of a thundering storm and the tomb seemed fairly to live as lightning danced around the star and crescent of Islam on its roof, and I sat comparing homeland motoring with the Indian brand.

Any motorist rolling through the glens and jungles of Hindustan is certain, sooner or later, to run down a bullock, spend hours fighting to have the gates across level crossings opened, buy tinned water for petrol, spend hours while merchants hunt for change, and a month's salary in tolls to cross gullies and rivers.

He will pay anything from thirty cents to eighty-five cents for a gallon of petrol and periodically find himself confronted with new types of taxes the like of which he never met before. Of every ten vehicles to pass him at least half will be without drivers of any kind whatever. If he kills anybody, regardless of whose fault it is, he can get off with a payment of eighty dollars. On an average of once a month he'll ruin a tyre beyond repair. In the south he will never see nor hear a hitch-hiker, but up north there are hundreds, most of them armed to the teeth.

Even in the most remote sections of jungle you'll find

a place to sleep in India; generally a mud bungalow inhabited by bats, mosquitoes and lizards in that order, but some are clean and neat with such luxuries as tiled bathrooms and electric stoves. A standard price for a night in such a spot is forty cents, but there are all sorts of rackets. You roll up to the bungalow just at dusk and toot your horn for a half-hour. This gradually attracts people who stare at you. They have no shyness or modesty about staring. They press their faces against the glass of the car to see what you look like, and even though you stay for hours and hours they never move on; never stop staring.

Eventually the man with the keys to the bungalow comes and opens the gates. He's the khansama. The bungalow belongs to the government and he looks after it without pay, although he's entitled to sleep in the servants' quarters out back. He makes his money out of you and me who are the casual wanderers.

Now he sleepily opens the bungalow and steps aside to let the bats fly out. Recruits come to unload your gear. You carry two servants with you, but beyond untying the ropes they do no unloading whatever. A man hurries—actually hurries—to a nearby well or river and brings you water to bathe in. Another hooks himself on a rope and starts waving a fan.

You'll find a charpoy—a sort of rope bed—in the room. On top of this go your own mattress and sheets; up goes a framework over which your mosquito net is draped. A sweeper or untouchable, usually a woman, brings in a portable toilet, generally made to fit an eight-year-old boy. She sets this beside the round tin bathtub, which is likewise built on midget lines, and periodically returns to see if either or both have been used.

Now the khansama dawdles in again to see if you'll have dinner. You know if you have dinner it will be foul bazaar fare and cost you a dollar or at least two

rupees eight—about ninety cents. You say, no, you don't want dinner because you've brought your own tinned stuff. His face falls and all the service you've been getting abruptly stops.

Then you cheer him up by a bit of soft-soaping. You know his dinner will be fine but you are really far too tired after a hard day on the road to wait for it to be cooked. But if he wouldn't mind getting you a chicken and cooking it up for you to take to-morrow you'll be delighted. That's great. He sees a 300 per cent profit in the chicken and the services go into action again.

In the morning willing hands bustle around to get the car loaded and along comes the khansama with a bill. At first you expect it to be forty cents plus a dollar for the chicken, but you get something like this:

Lodgings in bungalow	.40
Bed	.40
Punkah wallah (fan boy)	.30
Light	.20
Water for bath	.40
Chota hazri (cup of tea)	.20
Coolies	.40
Messenger	.30
Chicken	1.00
Cooking chicken	.30
Light for servants	.10
	$4.10

You sigh and pay, and then you see all sorts of assorted hangers-on looking for tips. The girl sweeper has suddenly sprouted two helpers. The boys who had carted your luggage the ten steps from car to bungalow are now six boys. There is a beastie, or water carrier; a man comes along and says he is the gardener, but there is no garden. That doesn't matter. Another is the

chowkedar, or night watchman. He is a doddering old fellow who slept all night, of course, but he pretends he guarded your life through the dark hours. So you tip all these fellows four cents each—say, ten of them—and see that you're out $4.50, which is what you'd pay for a first-class hotel at home.

If you stay three or four nights, instead of one, the cost drops a bit. The tips, for instance, are no more or no less than four cents no matter how long you stay, but the boys will find new ways of unloosing your money belt.

After the second day you're sure to be visited by fakirs, magicians, mind readers, snake charmers, story-tellers and all the rest of these quick-witted wise guys who play on the superstitions of the Indians. Generally away off in the jungle you meet far more genuine magicians than in town.

This trip I saw one man apparently cut deep gashes in his arm or leg, call for his wife who bustled up with a needle, thread and bandage. She sewed the man together again, bandaged the wound, went through a lot of mesmeristic hocus-pocus; then took the bandage off. There was no scar of any kind.

This woman also sewed buttons all over her own face. This is a tough enough job even from the standpoint of the sewing, let alone the physical pain of the thing. After she'd sewn four buttons on each cheek I was invited to pull them and see if they were the genuine article fit to hold up a man's pants. They certainly seemed to be real buttons sewed on to real skin with real thread, and I never did find out what the secret was. I didn't, however, pull them off.

The most unusual snake experience I came across this trip was from E. O. Austin, Ford executive. Austin had rolled into a South India dak bungalow late on a steaming rainy night. The monsoon was at its height and he was dead beat. There was no bed in this bungalow, no

light, no fan puller or other tip hounds such as I've mentioned. He brought in his own camp bed, set it up in the dark and flopped on it exhausted.

Soon came the menacing pst! pst! of an angry cobra.

The sound was right under Austin's bed. He knew that if he moved the snake might pounce at the bulge in the canvas, which was his body. This village was hours and many miles from any doctor; too far for any man to get alive if he were bitten by a cobra.

"Ali," he whispered to his bearer, "there's a snake under the bed . . . come get him."

The light was shone all round the room into the dark corners where snakes often come for shelter in the rains, along the rafters of the ceiling. No snake. Austin got up and took the torch. No snake.

Back he went to bed, but no sooner did he move in the cot than the menacing hiss came again. Pst! pst! pst!

"Ali . . . under the bed again . . . look carefully."

The beam shone under the bed. It was all clear there. No snake moved, not even in deepest shadows. Austin got up again, took the torch and started a hunt. Behind him came the same menacing hiss. He whirled about, and there, pinned under a leg of his cot, was the tinfoil from a packet of cigarettes. The wind, occasionally whistling through the open door, raised the paper and made it tingle in the exact sound of an angry cobra.

One day I came across a large black cobra on the road, and when he didn't seem in a hurry to slide away I got out of the car to try for him with the rifle but he had squirmed off toward the jungle. I went after him but found nothing except a hole where I thought he had gone. After a five-minute wait I went back to the road and found that the boys, thinking the luggage all wrong, had unloaded it and were starting to pack up again.

That would take fifteen minutes so I went back to sit

over the cobra hole. I was there about five minutes, making sure the stone I sat on was all in the clear, when I felt like smoking. I lit a cigarette and as the match flared something moved in the tree overhead. The cobra!

He was hanging there sort of head down and having trouble with his tail. It had dropped off the branch above and he didn't seem to know where to put it. I let fly and blood spurted. He came unfastened, coil by coil, and fell, but caught on a lower branch. His hood was up but he had trouble keeping it up. I backed away confident that I wouldn't need another cartridge, and soon he tumbled down and started weaving drunkenly to his hole. I had him about six inches behind the neck and finished him off with the rifle butt. He measured seven feet one inch, which is very big for a black cobra.

Several nights while I tossed in strange bungalows I could hear lizards fighting or making love in the thatch of the roof and practically no night went by that jackals in packs of a dozen or so didn't come to the door of the mud hut and howl in their nerve-wracking high moan. Not even a wolf pack in full cry has that eerie wail of pessimism and death that the jackal unleashes as he prowls through the night hunting for rotting bodies.

The hyena was not so frequent although we came across one every week or so. People describe its cry in the dark as the laugh of a maniac, and that is probably as good a description as any provided you don't imagine any mirth in that laugh. It's more the scream of a man animal rather uncertain as to whether it should attack or not. Only once did tigers come near the bungalow. On that occasion there were two. Neither one roared. It seemed more as if they were calling each other names in the dark. A cross between a growl and a purring of deep contentment.

Often we encountered large bands of gipsy criminals

and near Allahabad one day a large mob of them hearing of the King's jubilee, a fortnight after it was over, suddenly remembered with glowing pride that they were British too and George V was their emperor. They held a palaver at which 200 old men made speeches of an hour or more. This took a week. Then they sent a deputation to ask the chief of police if he'd come and meet them in the name of the great white emperor. He came and was solemnly assured by the assembled crooks that after due deliberation they had decided to honour His Majesty by not stealing any cattle for a year.

Of course they would continue to pilfer anything else they could lay hands on but cattle were safe.

All these thoughts seemed to come racing that night with the speed of the lightning which lit up the Taj but the most prominent and recurring thought was that the Indian peasant people are the most hospitable in the world. The backwoods Indian who never owns so much as forty cents at one time in all his life is honoured and flattered if you drift into his poor mud shack, and often as not, if you have no other place to sleep, he'll move out, turn his whole place over to you and scorn any payment whatever. All you need in such case is a copper-lined stomach and insecticide for blood.

Chapter XVI

WHO WANTS AN ELEPHANT?

FROM Agra I had to go back into Indore State, where the maharajah devoured all news of Canada's famed quintuplets with avidity; then I rolled north toward Lahore and got tangled up with an expensive baby blue automobile arranged in the purdah manner. That is, the windows were of double thickness in black or deep blue glass so that the occupant could look out and see you but you couldn't look in and see her. Sort of peek-a-boo game. The idea seemed lop-sided when you noticed the colour and arrangement of the car, which was deliberately aimed at attracting attention.

During the first 60 miles up the road this car streaked by us four times. It went by at perhaps 60 miles an hour while we held to a steady 50. Then it squared itself into the middle of the road, cut to 40 and hung there until we passed again. On the fifth of these passes the big blue car was evidently told to keep going because there was no settling down to 40 that time. She just zoomed along and was soon lost to sight. About an hour later that haughty machine developed gland trouble and we came across it stalled in the sun with the driver peering ineffectually into its bowels.

"Need any help?" I sang out. He shook his head, which meant yes, only I didn't catch on, so we pushed along to Ambala, the city of intrigue; fought off eight million flies who wanted to swim in the syrupy pop I bought and rolled along toward Ludhiana.

A mile out of town we came upon the blue car again, the driver waving his arms for aid. All we could do was

move a vote of sympathy and offer to carry the lady on wherever she was going. She was a Sikh and I got the silly idea that she had a beard, because every time I even say the word Sikh I think of big black beards, sometimes even of bearded ladies.

The driver said that would never do because I would see the lady and other people would see the lady and that meant he'd be fired or beheaded or something. We stuck around anyhow and soon the lady got out, covered her face with a big green handkerchief and sat in the shade of a tree trying to eat a banana and keep her face covered at the same time. This is a hard trick.

I went over and asked her if she didn't want a lift. She didn't answer such effrontery from a strange male, so I collected my gang and we pushed off. Another hour went by and so did the blue bus. It went along all haughty and proud for 10 miles, then collapsed for the tenth time and this time the lady was fed up enough to say, yes, if we'd take her for a ride she'd be delighted and her home town was Amritsar.

She draped the green handkerchief across a window, had the rear blind pulled down and silently suffered the indignity of having me look at her—which wasn't such a task at that, because she was handsome in a big horsy sort of a way. She had powerful white teeth, a tawny peaches and cream complexion and steady, fearless eyes.

I asked her how she liked being caged up like the crown jewels all the time, and she must have been asked that before because she gave me quite a sales talk on the comforts of the sheltered life and the merits of the old-fashioned virtues. Said these were fine and she had no desire to fly the Atlantic, swim the English Channel or play golf.

"You seem to have lots of time for reading," I went on.

"Certainly, I read about women flying over oceans

and climbing mountains and having five babies at a time and I say that is all foolish. We Sikhs are admired and respected by our husbands, and our place is in the centre of his home and his life. That satisfies me and most of the women I know, and if you think, as most people who visit this country seem to think, that we are pining and fretting for freedom you make a terrible mistake."

That seemed about all there was to say about the modern harem girl, so we were silent until Amritsar, where we dropped the lady at her home; were at first under deep suspicion by the husband, who thought I had ruined his car and injured his wife, but when he'd been told his car was not smashed and I'd been a knight-errant of the road he took me down by the famed—and very disappointing—golden temple and there presented me with a lancer's sword, no less. It was a fancy-looking sword in a crimson scabbard with a big hooked blade.

Because of some Moslem celebration the Punjab capital was crowded beyond its hotel limits, so I had to share a room with a forestry official who was just returning to his jungles in Kathiawar from an exciting tiger hunt in distant Assam, the tea country on the road to Darjeeling.

C. B. had been called to the Assam hills because neither snares nor traps nor poisons nor gunmen had been able to get rid of the striped killer that had slaughtered three and wounded ten people in a three weeks' campaign. The fact that the animal had only killed three of its 13 prospective victims indicated to this jungle wallah that it was an old-timer . . . the usual man-eating type.

Hunters were summoned from all surrounding tea gardens and beaters sent shrieking through the underbrush to drive the killer forth, but the whole noisy enterprise was a dismal failure until C. B. sent for the famed hunting elephant, Kandan Piari, a grandmother

among pachyderms, who could smell out a tiger from a mile away.

On the back of most elephants used for a jungle chase, after tiger or wild boar, there is a steel screened cage. The hunter inside that cage is safe from the snarling assault of the tiger even though the elephant is pulled to her knees, as sometimes happens.

C. B., however, had a wooden leg and this stuck out in such a way that he could never fit himself into one of those steel cages. He, therefore, put an old mattress on Kandan's back, stuck two shells into his 50-calibre rifle and set out. Old Kandan found the killer tigress less than a mile from camp; found her in cultivated tea ground within 50 yards of female pickers whom she had evidently decided to feast on when she got ready.

To the horror of both the hunter and his plantation host, who had followed on a polo pony, his elephant started to bolt in silent panic.

There was something sinister, something terrifying in the scent of that man-eater and the mahout sitting on the elephant's head was unable to control his startled animal.

Down through the tea garden she raced with the tigress in pursuit and the pickers so excited at this strange spectacle that they forgot to be frightened. Never before had any of them seen a hunting elephant put to flight. Three times the elephant turned on the pursuing tigress with such speed as almost to throw the two men—hunter and mahout—off her back and three times the tigress stopped so close as to be out of range from the forestry officer's rifle.

He fired, to be sure, unloaded his powerful rifle twice, but none of the four shots were hits. The tigress was so close as to be out of range. In desperation C. B. decided to drop off and take a chance with that tigress on her own level.

The mahout, calmly going about the business of keeping the elephant under control, ridiculed the idea with grunts and snorts. If he wasn't shrieking at the elephant and jabbing him with a steel goad, he was calling his master a suicide in the making and a pig into the bargain. The mahout, it seemed, had a plan of his own. He'd manœuvre the big elephant under a tree, get her to stop there long enough for the officer to climb into the branches and then try to keep within range long enough for the colonel to get in a deadly shot.

Trying to get the panic-stricken elephant slowed down and a one-legged hunter into a tree took a longer time to do than it does to write and everybody was in a frenzy of excitement except the tigress. She had had everything her own way up to this time, had killed and eaten people when she felt like it, put a trained elephant to rout and laughed off the efforts of the hunter to shoot her.

Now, the very instant the hunter and his gun were off her back that cunning beast leaped. Fast and true she went for the eyes. The elephant trumpeted shrilly. Razor-sharp claws opened long gashes down the trunk. Again came that leap. More gashes were opened and blood streamed from them. Still a third leap, and down went the elephant on her knees.

The tigress, completely ignoring the mahout who was bravely thrashing about with his steel goad, ripped and tore at the fallen elephant. The elephant heaved and puffed. She was all in. The tigress teased, slashed and occasionally roared. She would undoubtedly have killed the elephant there and then had she not forgotten the huntsman. He, seeing an open chance, let fly from his tree and bowled the tigress over. The shell broke her hip but she was not finished. She went again at the elephant, once more ignored the mahout who was trying to get his great beast to her feet and calmly stood there while he succeeded.

The elephant, looking as if she'd been run over by a train, lumbered to her feet, another bullet sang out from the tree and missed. The tigress, putting her very life into one more leap, came sailing through the air, once more caught the elephant on the upper part of the trunk, then slowly slid down like a monkey on a rope, while blood dripped in puddles to the ground.

The elephant, from sheer exhaustion and terror, lurched away. By this time C. B., in spite of his stiff leg, had got out of the tree and come to the scene of this concentrated battle. Neither elephant nor tigress paid the slightest attention to him. From the very beginning this had been a private battle between a Rajput elephant and an Assam tigress. They wanted no outside interference.

The marksman came closer. He had only one bullet left. The tigress backed away for another spring when the shell crashed into her brain and finished a brave and gallant enemy.

A few weeks later, old Kandan got her revenge by being in on the death of two tigers, one of which she held under the shallow water of a pool until it drowned. But that was in her own back yard: in Rajputana. When they took Kandan to the Assam hills she was a startled and worthless baby.

The Indian elephant market, incidentally, has all gone to pot what with circuses and zoos going broke and tractors taking the place of the working crews.

For $35 down and ten payments of $30 each you can pick up a smart young tusker that would have cost $4,000 cash on the line a few years ago, but there are no takers. At one spot on the Ganges side I saw 500 elephants paraded to the auction block as maharajas and assistant pooh-bahs throughout the country decided to unload. Of the 500 only 41 were sold.

One frantic maharanee, seeing herself being steadily

eaten into the poorhouse by a herd of 30 state tuskers she could neither sell nor give away, ordered the whole bunch slaughtered but found herself stumped by the wailing of priests, who swore that the ghosts of the murdered elephants would come back to make her life a torment from that hour forward. You can imagine the horror of an elephantine ghost.

This particular maharanee was one who had made herself famed throughout the country a few years ago by telling the priests to go and cut their throats when they demanded that she, on the death of her husband, should prostrate herself in the customary indignities prescribed for widows. The ranee, who was young and pretty and full of pep, gave that idea a deep red raspberry and by way of mourning threw some parties that made even India gasp. But the priests beat her on this order to slaughter the state elephants and she has them yet.

The catching of wild elephants alive has been practically stopped but it still costs about $350 to go out and shoot one dead, and there are still alleged sports to whom the shooting of an animal as wide as a barn door is good fun.

Travancore State, one of the strongholds of the wild elephant herds, staged a jungle round-up in May of 1935 at which about 50 big tuskers were caught in corrals or deep pits.

Except for a few Robert Flaherty needed in the making of his jungle picture *Elephant Boy,* nobody could be found either to buy or rent the captives so they were all set loose again.

Until Lord Willingdon became viceroy every representative of the King in his Indian empire had not one but dozens of state elephants all dressed up like circus barkers. Once in awhile the viceroy was even persuaded to go out and ride one of the things. Governors of presidencies such as Bombay and Madras also had

tuskers they had no use for but had to keep up because it had always been done. Willingdon had tolerated the elephants when governor of Bombay but when he was appointed viceroy and sent out to live in the biggest and most elaborate house in all the world he said, sure, but no elephants.

"But, Your Excellency! India, the land of the tiger and the elephant, and you the ruler . . ."

"I said no elephants . . . neither trained nor wild nor big nor small. We'll have no elephants."

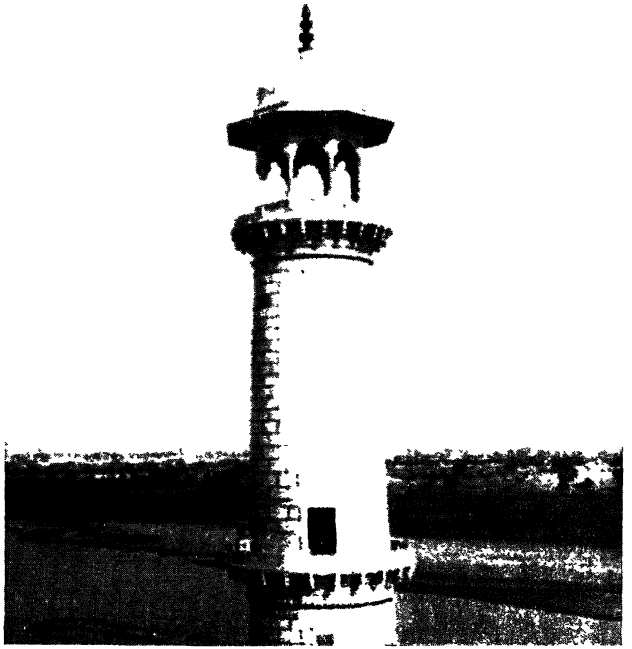
Well, that was just as though the King-Emperor decided to stop putting on evening clothes. A lot of people would be startled and some genuinely relieved but sooner or later they'd all stop wearing evening togs.

One by one the maharajahs started selling off their elephants. Those to chuck their big bulls on the market first collected nice prices, but as the liquidation of tuskers took on the nature of a bear panic in bulls prices sagged to an all-time low. Having been chucked out as picturesque flunkeys, the elephants discovered themselves pushed out of working jobs too. The jungle mail—only place on earth where the postman delivered his letters from elephant back—was abolished in Burma and the mailman given a car.

The best elephant story of the year comes from a Jesuit mission in Travancore deep in the elephant country where Padre Miguel is a hunter of skill and repute. When Miguel went out with his gun, the boys at the monastery were pretty sure to have quail or buck or peacock for dinner. A couple of times Miguel came across tiger and leopard while on his prowls, and while these never attacked him, he got a bit nervous because his 25.20 rifle was much too light for such vicious customers.

So on the day of this anecdote Miguel was out, followed by a bearer carrying a double-barrelled .45

Pariah dogs drive the vultures away from the remains of the tiger



The minaret of the Taj Mahal, from which many lovers leap to death in the Jhelum River below

We meet some tiger-hunting elephants on the road

Officers of the Rajputana Rifles spying out tribal activities near Razmar, Waziristan

express, guaranteed to bring down an elephant. When rifles get up into the .40 calibres and higher there is no use making them repeaters, because they'd have to have magazines that were too big. So they are double-barrelled like shotguns.

Well, there is Miguel with his .25 and there is his bearer with a .45 when what do they walk into but a big bull elephant! A tusker in love, no less, and horrified at this intrusion into his domestic pastures. He smelled the padre about the same time the priest saw him, and both shrieked.

The tusker trumpeted in defiance, and the priest roared for his big gun. But the gun bearer had seen enough. He was gone. Down through the jungle he streaked with the priest after him, and the big bull after the priest. Both were overtaking the bearer, with the elephant gaining at every step, when the bearer dropped the gun and raced up a palm tree like a terrified ape.

The priest kept going, but the elephant, evidently expecting just such a move, stopped and started pushing the tree down. This saved the priest, who now got into another tree. What he saw amazed him. The elephant, noting the gun on the ground, picked it up with his trunk and inspected it. He whirled it around, put it down, picked it up again. Then came a deep ping as the gun went off. The elephant staggered, collapsed, got up again and lurched back from where he'd come. He didn't show any of the accustomed fury of a wounded beast, but rather the sick swaying of a badly hurt man.

Soon the sound of his drunken crashing through the jungle stopped; after a suitable interval, the priest followed him and found the big fellow dead. He had shot himself through the mouth.

Although it seemed utterly fantastic, this yarn was printed in most of India's papers and one of them, the reputable and readable *Times* of India, was sufficiently

intrigued to send out a reporter to chase down the facts. He reported the story as truth, so I leave it to you. . . . I also pass on another report from the same publication of an event I personally witnessed but since somebody is going to be a target for abuse and the label of liar for its publication I might as well let the *Times* take the fall. Here's the report:

Three hundred and sixty-four farmer couples were married in the village of Tithwa last week. Among the bridegrooms were babies in arms and only a few of proper age. Some 1,500 carts stood outside the village gates, and the arrival of each bridegroom was announced by musket shots. The Maharana Raj Saheb Sir Amarsinhji Bahadur attended and watched the ceremonial.

Generally, all farmer families who want to have their sons or daughters married, flock to one village, and all the marriages are performed on the same day. One sees among the brides and bridegrooms little girls and boys aged a few years and some only months or weeks.

Farmers, every two or three years, select a convenient village for the celebration of marriages of their children.

Monday was the day fixed. Preparations were undertaken on a large scale by the marriage committee, headed by Patel Jalal Mimanji, an enthusiastic worker, though advanced in age. Some six tons of sweet-balls, etc., were prepared for one meal for the whole community.

The spacious compound of the market was selected for the feast, having accommodation for five to six thousand people. The compound was shaded, and a number of big earthen pots of cold drinking water were placed within reach of the diners. Parents of the girls to be married were accommodated in the village.

The main gate was kept closed till 7.30 a.m. Then his highness the maharana, Sir Amarsinhji Bahadur, in company with Maharaj Kumar Saheb, arrived. The gate was opened, and the bridegrooms were escorted in procession to their respective houses. Every bridegroom who could carry one had

a sword in hand. All were seated in bullock-carts and clad in marriage dress, decorated with gold and silver. Each cart conveying a bridegroom was preceded by drummers who beat their drums with skill and strength. Escorting each bridegroom were young farm boys with muskets, which they fired from time to time.

It was about three hours before the last bridegroom reached his house.

At about noon came the call to dinner and all the women assembled. Dividing themselves into groups of five or seven, they took their meal from the same dishes. The men sat down when the women had done. To the credit of the diners, no food was left.

The custom of dining in groups from the same dishes is supposed to engender love and fellowship.

Enthusiasm reached its highest pitch at night when the 364 bridegrooms were married. The main bazaar was gaily illuminated.

Landlords or kazis, as they are called, are privileged to perform the wedding ceremony of their respective villages. This takes about half an hour. The kazi recites religious verses, which are repeated by the bridegrooms. In cases of bridegrooms and brides of minor ages, this ceremony has to be repeated when they attain maturity. It is worthy of note that brides are sent to the houses of bridegrooms only after they attain maturity.

As the number of kazis was less than required, each kazi had to perform the marriage ceremonies of four or more bridegrooms, and so nearly three hours were required for this important ceremony.

After the actual marriage ceremonies were over, the bridegrooms took dinner with their parties at the brides' houses, and then dispersed.

Tuesday was a day of excitement. All the bridegrooms left their houses early in the morning and went outside the village, where they formed themselves in a procession. Each bridegroom rode a horse gaily caparisoned and was escorted by farmers who walked on foot. Perfect order was maintained in the procession. It was about three hours before the last bridegroom reached his residence.

The last item on the programme was the striking down with musket aims of three cocoanuts suspended from the loftiest branch of a tree. Skilled musketeers rivalled with each other and eventually succeeded in their attempts to bring down the cocoanuts.

The bridegrooms' parents invited the brides' relatives to their houses for dinner, which goes by the name of varothi dinner. The bridegrooms' parties dispersed about two p.m. to their respective homes, and Tithwa was a quiet village again.

You'll notice in all this that the brides were about as important as that third button on a man's coat-sleeve and the height of overstatement was reached when the reporter thought it worth mentioning that none of the six tons of food was left.

Chapter XVII

War Clouds

THOSE dusty hot days between the ending of the quake and the coming of the monsoon passed quickly. Frequently I visited hill stations to cool out and each climb brought more and graver news of the Ethiopian war. Home mail suggested it would be a good idea to invade the plateau of the Elect of God and Lion of Judah, so I decided to get back to Bombay with all speed, turn in the car, and sail for Aden five days across the Arabian sea and logical hop-off spot for the battle zone.

This decision was made at Indore, capital of the state by that name, where I'd been the guest of a wealthy mill-owner with a passion for waxed fruit, stuffed birds, shirts made from cloth of gold and American visitors. I was with him a couple of days sleeping on a bed about the size of a tennis court and eating very tasty meals at a different table than my host.

He, being high caste, could not defile himself by dining with me. From time to time servants crept stealthily into the room and put on a squirt-gun barrage of diluted perfume, then followed it up with blasts of powerful insecticide. During these gas attacks the old man would smile with over-powering amiability and flutter his serviette coyly as though to assure me that everything was really all right.

On the run toward Shivpuri I de-horned a water buffalo, which battered the car more than somewhat, and then slowly bled to death by the road. The owner of this indiarubber bovine was full of apologies because of the

damage to the car, explaining that his buffalo, having been road-shy when hitched to a bandy wagon, had been blinded by the simple process of running a red-hot wire into his eyes. Now he had stumbled into the path of my car and he, the owner, was very sorry.

This was okay until the village agitator mounted a barrel and launched forth into an oration against white-skinned invaders who drove cars at furious pace down the roads of India killing stock every mile or so. His tirade grew to a mad crescendo so that I had to pay for the buffalo, being satisfied that the agitator, not the owner, got the rupees.

The Shivpuri Hotel, a long rambling red building, had only one other guest. He, togged out in formal clothes and a monocle, was dining on the terrace when we pulled in. I saw that he'd been driving a car too, so sought a little advice on the general subject of prowling beasts either savage or domestic.

"My dear sir," the guest said with resounding dignity. "I am neither a solicitor nor a zoologist."

In the morning the old chap unbent enough to remove his monocle and say good morning. Then we were off in opposite directions but I got hung up in the bazaar where I bought four gallons of petrol just to be on the safe side, and learned to my dismay I only had a hundred rupee (forty dollar) bill. Of course nobody could change such a fortune at six in the morning. The man made some perfunctory effort at getting the thing broken by his brother merchants, but they stared at him with fishy eyes as if to say that any man with so much money was a bandit; so he came back, wound my bill tightly into his turban, flopped on his rope bed and invited sleep.

I got out of the car and went under a mango tree to read, but was surprised to find a woman there sleeping. She was young, about eighteen, filthy, and in spite of her

filth rather pretty. She wakened, got up and stretched, standing there in the square quite naked.

There was a stone direction post pointing the way to Bombay and to Agra, so she walked over to that and sat down. Across from the post was a well and the housewives of Shivpuri were coming there with big pot-bellied jars on their heads to get the day's water. As they dragged the fluid up on long ropes they also brought up all sorts of dirty things like dead birds or rats. Then, to purify the water, they poured it from one brass jar into another with a piece of cheesecloth between the two. This was sanitation and filtration in the Indian manner.

I sat watching all this go on when a baby, a mere toddler of perhaps two, came unsteadily pattering through the dust and stood beneath the stone on which the naked girl sat. He talked baby talk for a bit, so she picked the gaffer up and tried to nurse him.

He whimpered a little, so I guess the girl had no breakfast for him. Then some goats with bells around their necks came by; and the goat herder, seeing the little boy, put him on the ground and brought a milch goat over. The baby knew just what to do and the goat didn't mind a bit. She let him suck all the milk he wanted, then hurried on to catch up with the rest of the herd.

Meantime, the girl had watched her chance; and when the well was deserted she went over, pulled up a pail of water and gave herself a bath while an ever-growing crowd of people passed on their way to their work. She was very particular about her bath and took a long time. Then she came back to where she'd been sleeping, found a frayed piece of towel, and by a few twists of the wrist managed to cover herself with it. She picked up the little boy, straddled him across her hip, and walked away.

I read for awhile, then growing more and more

impatient with all this delay, sauntered down the road. I came to a low thatched building and could hear the droning of hundreds of childish voices. This was a school, but I was surprised to see some of the pupils standing outside and saying their pieces through the window.

A fat man with a big caste mark came along and said, "Are you the man with the big green car?"

"Yes."

"Are you going toward Bombay?"

"Yes."

"For five rupees would you take me with you?"

"Sure, I'll take you for nothing . . . but tell me, why are these pupils not inside the schoolroom? There seems to be plenty of room."

"Harijan," he said, "untouchable . . . are you interested in untouchables?" He didn't wait for an answer but whipped out a book. "It has been my study these past three years," he said. "You're not British, so I can tell you. Listen, the oldest British settlements in this country are in Madras. Do you realize that to this very day an untouchable dares not defend himself in a Madras court? Here," he declared. "See what I have written."

He handed me a pamphlet and ran a pencil under the words "In Madras Presidency, but not in the city itself, Hindu judges will allow no defendant or no witnesses of the untouchable caste within the court precincts and their interrogations are conducted by means of a messenger who asks the questions and comes back with the answers . . . pleaders who will often serve a high-caste man for the prestige it gives them, always charge double rates to defend an untouchable and very often do not even bother to turn up in court, yet demand their full fee."

"British justice," the man hissed. "It is preposterous. Do you realize"—he clutched my arm—"that in

these days of advancement and progress the fifty to sixty millions of India's untouchables dare not send their children to school? Of course, it is in the law that they can. Oh! yes, there is perfect equality in a technical way. But you saw those children. They must stand outside the school; in burning sunshine or pouring rain, that's what they must do. Of course, that is not all. They are insulted, shunned, spat upon. The children can't normally stand such humiliation day after day, it breaks their hearts; so they don't go to school but drop back into their old ruts. If there really was such a thing as heartbreak, these children would all die from it."

"But you are a high-caste man," I said, looking at the perfumed cow dung on his forehead.

"Of course, and glad of it. So is my friend Gandhi. But we will fight to the end against this terrible thing. Think if you will of the poor untouchable who dies. His friends dare not burn him in the public ghats and they must not bury him. Even in death the taint of being like a dog is upon them."

"But what do they do if they can't bury or burn the dead?"

"They slink up some back alley or down to the river in the night and there they take care of their own that are dead. It is all the fault of the British."

"I'm British," I said.

"Well, I'm sorry; but it is still the fault of the British. They encourage the segregation of the untouchables under a cloak of religious tolerance. But they are frightened that if the untouchables really linked up with the caste Hindus in a political way they would throw the British out of this country quicker than they will be thrown out in any case."

He ran through his little book and showed me proof that in Bengal postmen will not deliver letters to untouchables. In Madras and even in Bombay "no untouchable

is allowed the services of a Hindu barber, tailor, water carrier or musician . . . they dare not set foot in a hotel . . . must not use the dak bungalows which are put up and maintained by the government out of taxes collected from untouchables as well as caste Hindus."

He went on and on reading from his book of atrocities. Then the petrolman stirred himself into life, got my hundred chips changed—at a cost of two bits—and we were ready to go.

The Hindu in the war paint then thrust the book into my hand and got out of the car. "Sorry," he said, "I withdraw my request to ride with you. I heard you speak and thought you were American. I could not ride with a British man. I trust you will read my book."

It was a shocking book, and I think it was all true.

On the way down I noticed several other schools where the low-caste pupils had to stand outside the window to hear what the teacher was saying.

Beyond stalling out of petrol and having to walk ten miles for it, nothing much happened for the balance of that run toward the sea but in Bombay itself I met a man, presumably a rich and influential man, who turned out to have some weird sort of phobia.

I'd spent evenings with this man twice before, at clubs, and on this third occasion he invited me to visit him at his new and elaborate home out by Breach Candy, the Bombay swimming club. His house was streamlined, air-conditioned, futuristic and practically movable. Certain ceilings slid away at the flip of a button, disclosing the stars if you wished to sleep under the stars without going outside. Bathrooms, of which there were about eight, were of coloured glass. So were the tubs and these had electric globes inside them so you could give yourself a pinkish glow or a sinister green coating whenever you felt in the mood. Everything was electrically run from fountains to fans.

I was shown through all this grandeur in the afternoon. We had a highball or two and I went back to the hotel to change because I was having dinner at the same house.

When I returned, about nine, a butler took my hat, said I was expected but Mr. Saskvar (not his real name) was unfortunately not present. There was no explanation of what had happened to him, he was simply not present. This was a puzzle because Saskvar could have telephoned me if he'd been called away, and the dinner dropped.

I went into a large, sunken living-room from which all windows had disappeared. The walls had been tightly closed where the windows had been and ventilation was coming through the ceiling. In this room were a dozen young women . . . either European or Anglo-Indians who were so close to the edge of true European blood that none but an expert would have known it. They were well-dressed and coiffed and made up. They chattered of what very young women in Bombay chatter about, which are dates and drinks and men and clothes. They drank cocktails—very good cocktails indeed—which they mixed themselves. They were the same type of crowd you'd find in Berlin or Los Angeles or Prague.

They completely ignored me. Nobody introduced me. Nobody acknowledged my presence either in the room or in the house. Nobody handed me a cocktail. There were no other men present and I felt like a large-sized idiot. I probably spent the most uncomfortable half-hour of my life in that futuristic mansion beyond the Bombay race-track. It was as though I wore a suit of invisibility.

After what seemed a lifetime the butler announced that dinner was served. We all trooped into a dining-room of beauty, dignity and good taste. Besides the

butler there were five Goanese servants to pass the food and one to handle the wines, which were all vintage products from famed châteaux.

After a fruit cocktail and soup, a large roast was placed before me. Obviously I was pinch hitting for the host and obviously, too, the young women couldn't completely ignore me now that I was serving the food. They almost succeeded in this, however, and whatever crumbs of conversation fell my way were absent-minded instructions or perfunctory thanks.

The dinner drifted on. My early embarrassment passed, partly under the cheering influence of the good wine and partly because I realized this must have been some sort of game and it was worth while seeing it out just for the hell of it.

The dinner ended. Coffee and liqueurs were served in another room. There was no relaxation in the air of complete indifference with which I was surrounded. It was not an air of hostility or antagonism. It was just as if I were not in the room at all. If I said anything there was no reply. If I asked anything I'd get perhaps a one-word answer. At best I'd get a single sentence.

At long last one girl, quite of her own volition, because I'd given up by this time, asked: "How do you like this place? . . . It's quite new."

"Yes, I see it is and I'm quite charmed with it. The construction certainly takes full advantage of the breeze from the sea and the beauty of a tropical night."

We drifted on for a bit in routine polite conversation like that, when the young woman suggested I'd like to see the garden by moonlight. Well, that was a pretty routine suggestion and the garden was a pretty routine garden. Beautiful, well-kept and fragrant but not spectacularly different like the house was. While drifting down a bordered pathway I decided to pump this girl as to what this whole situation was about.

"Most unfortunate," I said, "that Mr. Saskvar was called away so suddenly."

"Called away?" the girl said in surprise. "When was he called away?"

"Why, this afternoon; late this afternoon, that's why he wasn't there to receive us."

"You're silly," the girl said, breaking into a giggle. "He's never away. Why, there he is."

She pointed to a small balcony outside an upper window. There, sure enough, was my host smoking a cigar and gazing out to sea. He saw me look up and fluttered the cigar in greeting.

That's all there was to it. Nothing else happened except that I went home without taking any of the girls home and have been wondering ever since what it was all about.

I also did a spot of wondering about the Ethiopian war situation and decided to have none of it. My orders had been frontier India by motor car and I had done that with a high-powered earthquake thrown in for good measure, so now I decided to go home and booked passage on an Italian ship.

This I figured would give me a good look at Italy and if the situation was really uproarious and war was an active threat I could quiz the office and come back to Africa, preferably on a troop transport.

One of my fellow passengers on the home trip was an Irishman who had been so badly mauled by a wounded tiger that both his arms had to be cut off, so I played nursemaid to him, helping him with his feeding and drinking, both of which were along elephantine lines and didn't allow me much time to take care of myself.

This Irisher was one of the cheeriest blokes I ever came across and insisted on swimming, playing bridge, and dancing, all of which are pretty good tricks if you

can do them without arms. It was pretty awkward one day when the monsoon was bad and this Irisher got seasick. A seasick man without arms is more of a peril to his fellow passengers than you'd expect. It was also a bit embarrassing when he had to meet nature's demands, but I was generally close by and did the essentials at those times.

We did a bit of cheery hell-raising in Port Said and a good deal of it around the Piazza San Marco in Venice where the home-towners, rather than show hostility toward Britishers, treated us with the greatest consideration and courtesy.

I remembered two of us eating a positively colossal meal out in the square while curious passers-by stared at me feeding my armless pal. Then when we paid the bill, which totalled about $16, the *maître d'hôtel* beaming with smiles came along, announced that he had been saving a very old brandy for just such a special occasion as this and here was the bottle with his most sincere compliments. He set down the bottle and shyly went away. Next noon we wakened in the Bristol Hotel in Genoa, which is not a bad stunt because we had changed trains in Milan and Torino, not to mention getting down the Venetian canals by gondola. Neither of us spoke a word of Italian, one of us had no arms, and both were a little mellow with the brandy, but there we were, where we wanted to be, our luggage and pocket-books intact and everything cheery and bright.

We got up. I washed and shaved two rather worn faces, cleaned two sets of teeth and ordered a brace of seltzers. Then we downed man-sized steaks in a station dining-hall and parted.

I hurried down to the pier where I was to catch the *Conte Grande* for New York via Algiers, but she had been re-routed to Eritrea with troops; so I rushed back to the station to link up with the Irisher and was just in

time to see his train swing into the tunnel which carried him toward Paris. I was on the next train and chased the armless one to London but never linked up with him again.

Back in Toronto by way of Quebec the war news grew graver and graver and newsmen throughout the world were being massed for coverage. Elaborate and costly preparations for spot and feature developments had been worked out in all wire centres and every outward vessel had a correspondent or two aboard.

Then Huey Long temporarily reclaimed the front pages of the nation by being shot down on the doorstep of his beautiful capitol at Baton Rouge. I was soon in the air flying to Louisiana to get the background of the assassination, but we were grounded for nine hours by fogs and rains in the Mississippi cotton belt and when I blew in on New Orleans Huey Long was already cooling as lead-all page one.

I covered the funeral, which bore traces of a revivalist camp meeting, a four-ring circus and a political clambake, then stuck around Baton Rouge for the political fireworks most of us expected would blow up. These proved to be squibs, so I returned to Canada by train and in four hours was ordered to Ethiopia. I managed to stall for three days but on the fourth was aboard the *Normandie* for Havre. From there I rattled through the French wine country to Marseilles with a gay but anxious crew of lecturers and scribes, ne'er-do-wells and fortune-hunters bent on cleaning up something or other in the land of the Negus.

Next dawn I awoke in a heaving stateroom with five French naval officers aboard the China-bound *Chenonceaux* with Port Said the next stop. I was soon right back where I'd started from, the only things lacking being the cheery insolence of Baboo and the pessimistic cleanliness of the faithful Narayan.

Chapter XVIII

Meet Charlie Chan—In Person

JUST before dawn we reached Aden and those barren rocks at that time of day were a sight of beauty. They looked much like the silver-tipped backbone of some huge prehistoric beast. Brilliant between the vertebræ were a star and crescent. Just one shiny morning star and a thin eyebrow of moon; surely a good joss for any Mohammedan town. Signal lights winked from the masts of men-of-war, and we had to wait a half-hour until dawn had definitely come. Then we steamed down a lane between sixteen fighting ships, while each one dipped her white ensign in greeting.

Aden was frightened and suspicious. The whole civilian population seemed terrified and the military men were on the alert. Aside from the sixteen warships in harbour there were eight submarines and their supply ships, the biggest British armada ever gathered in Eastern waters.

In the hills were clusters of anti-aircraft guns pointing into a cloudless sky. On the salt flats in the forbidden section of the town were 300 aeroplanes, some of them mystery ships of incredible speed and range. More aeroplanes arrived by every mailboat.

Down the roads night and day rumbled whippet tanks and speedy armoured cars equipped with machine-guns and powerful radios. It was like being back in the Khyber area all over again.

What surprised me most was Governor Sir Bernard Riley's admission that one-sixth of all families in the land had vanished to India, that gas masks were on hand for

immediate issue to all Europeans on the rock should war come, and that talk of Italy's "Desperate Squadron" was taken seriously.

The "Desperate Squadron," as you've read, comprised those dare-devil airmen who had sworn, in case of war, to sink one British ship each by making human bombs of themselves. They were to load their machines —even their own bodies—with high explosives, then zoom in a power dive on the nearest cruiser flying the white ensign, and up they'll go, ship and aeroplane and men together.

I could get no room and had to bed down on the roof of the Crescent Hotel where I subsequently met a true to life Charlie Chan. In fiction, Earl Derr Biggers has created a super-detective who seems to combine the more amiable characteristics of a Buddhist monk, a bloodhound and Hindu mind reader. His name is Charlie Chan and his headquarters Honolulu.

Now let's meet Inspector P. S. Billimoria of the Aden police. To do this we sit watching flags go up and down from the masts of the warships. All day bugles ring out their imperative commands, drums rumble, aeroplanes flying wing to wing in V formation drone overhead.

While I was watching the gay pennants change colour on the various ships like so many winged lizards, a car rolled up and a cheery American voice sang out, "Hey, bud, how 'bout a swim?"

"You want me to lose a leg?"

"No, there's a shark-proof place back here, behind the hospital; not even a baby shark can get into it—and the water's swell."

So I collected a bathing suit and towel and climbed in behind the bronzed six feet of man called Arthur Waldron of Washington. Waldron was one of a horde of news cameramen who collected a $25 a week rise, six trunks of tropical gear and a fever of excitement at the

chance of taking picures of the battle of the century between the Negus of Ethiopia and Benito Mussolini, the white hope, but found little to photograph and was now, like hundreds of others, awaiting developments.

"You got much dough with you—cash dough, I mean; not traveller's cheques?" he asked as we rolled through barren rocks.

"I've got some francs—my funeral money," I said.

"Funeral money?" Waldron exclaimed. "How come, funeral money?"

"Didn't you have to pay for a Somaliland burial?" I asked.

"Never heard of it—are you putting the friz on me?"

"No. I'm serious. Before they let me step foot on French soil in Africa, I will have put up twenty-six hundred francs ($180) in case I die on their hands and they have to bury me."

"Well, that's a lot of dough, and these Arab rats around the swimming hole would slit a man's throat for ten fish. I've got some loose cash, too. We'd better turn this in to the club."

"What about your driver here?"

"Not him—you can trust him about as far as you'd row the *Normandie* with one oar."

We were across the hump now and the jagged rocks around us looked like the back door to hell. A Japanese ship, homeward bound, was just running down her flag. Some pearling luggers, their lateen sails billowing with a fresh breeze, scudded along for port.

"Lucky guys," Waldron said. "First of all, they've got something to do, and, second, they're going home. All we do is sit and think about ourselves and take root. Over in Addis Ababa if you listen close you can hear the white men falling to pieces . . . nothing's coming out of this war except headaches and expense accounts."

"Shake on that," I agreed. "This war's a flop."

The beach was aswarm with white folk of all shapes, sizes and ages. It was late afternoon, the one time of day it is safe to walk without sun-helmets, and this the one part of the sea where sharks cannot penetrate, although you could sometimes see the menacing swing of their black fins as they circled outside the steel wall. We checked our money and plunged in.

It was practically dark when we came out, dressed and sauntered toward a pavilion for the nightly sundowner. I told the Arab who had taken our money to bring it back with some drinks, but he kept darting about to other cash customers, ignoring us. "Doesn't like our accent," Waldron grinned. "We get in his hair."

The sun went behind a distant mountain and started its plunge from sight. Here on the equator the sun does not sink. It dives. At 6.06 every night it's dark. At 6.05 you can read your paper without a light; within the next minute, daylight has gone as though you'd flipped a button.

"Hey, boy, how about those wallets and drinks? *Fessa, fessa!*"

The boy paid no attention. Then light vanished. Day was done. The boy padded barefoot through the sand, dropped our wallets on the table and pushed along the drinks.

I noticed that my wallet was open, and disarranged. When a man prowls through the Far East, he must carry all sorts of documents to pay his way and prove who he is, and these soon bloat a wallet out like a dead mule, but he gets to know the feel of the thing and can tell if papers are out of place. However, I just buttoned the leather up and put it away. It was pitch dark and there were no lights, although the boy, when he brought the bill for swims and drinks, carried a torch so we could see how much to pay. I paid, gave him a 20-cent tip, which was far too much, and he seemed so excited at this

largeness that he stumbled and fell in his rush to get away before I changed my mind.

That's what I thought then. When I got back to my own diggings where there was light I counted up my money and the outer note—a tissue-paper horse blanket worth 1,000 francs ($70)—was gone. Now I knew why he had stumbled in haste.

I'd dropped Waldron at the club where the army and navy chaps were flirting with the burning ghats by eating oysters and drinking whiskys. Now I hurried back there. Luckily for me, he was playing billiards with the commandant of police.

I spilled out my story. The police chief, with devastating calm, chalked the end of his billiards cue, run off a few points while men on the terrace were howling "boy" in various accents denoting the wearing of the old school tie, then came back to hear more.

He chalked his cue again, then said: "Well, really, I'm not listening to this officially. I mean to say, the complaint will have to come from the club. You see the secretary, Commander Way. Tell him about it, then he will deal with it as a club matter or report to the police and we will go on with our investigation from there."

I'm afraid I looked pretty crestfallen, but there wasn't any use getting sore. I just started out to find Commander Way, hoping he wouldn't be at dinner, because if you disturb a man at his meal he's liable to get nasty, especially commanders in tropical outposts where a meal is a sacred occasion.

"But wait," the police chief said. "You don't know the way. Have you a car?"

"No."

"Well, take mine, dear fellow." He clapped hands and a driver appeared as if he'd just been hatched from the floor, some Arabic words burst around, and we were away toward a distant hill.

When I got to Commander Way's home he was giving a party and people were all dressed up drinking expensive drinks, and I felt like a farm hand who'd just wandered into the duke's bedchamber.

I stammered some absurdity about not wanting to disturb him when, as a matter of fact, I did want to disturb him very much. I hoped he would take me to another room away from these well-dressed people, who were looking at my khaki shirt and my bare legs and wondering what ship I was a distressed stoker off.

"Well?" the commander said.

"It's about the club—the swimming club—you are the secretary?"

"Honorary secretary, yes. What about the club?"

"I've been robbed!" I just blurted it out like that, a sort of after-the-fight announcement: "We was robbed."

The commander smiled a cheery smile in a red face. His guests all stopped talking and put down their drinks. They were interested. Here were mystery and melodrama walking through the front door.

"Robbed? Who robbed you? What did you lose?"

"A thousand francs . . . one of the boys at the club . . . gave him my wallet, and when I got it back the note was missing."

"Well, what did the boy say?"

"Nothing. I haven't seen him yet, but I saw the police chief and he told me to come to you at once and here I am rather interrupting your party."

"Go straight ahead," the party chorused. "This is exciting, we can all play detective. But, first of all, how much is a thousand francs?"

"It's seventy dollars or fourteen pounds or a hundred eighty-five rupees."

"Well now, you sit down and have a drink and take that worried look off your face, and we'll see what's to be done. Could you recognize the boy?"

"Yes. He wore a fez. He was the only one wearing a fez. He had a scar under his left eye. He was tall and thin."

"That's right . . . the head boy . . . now don't worry. The only trouble is that he might destroy the note. He probably plucked out something without even looking and when he finds it is so much money he'll be terrified. The first thing he'll do is bury the note out at the club. He has taken you, of course, for a through passenger off one of the ships and thinks that you will be far at sea again before the loss is noticed. He might, however, tear the note up when trouble comes his way—otherwise, we'll have your money."

I felt pretty good after that and went back to the club on the outside of a few cocktails. The chief said my next step was to report to the detective bureau. He loaned me his car again. It was dinner-time now and all the English-speaking detectives were out, but I sat in a grey, dimly lit cell-room and translated my story through the chief's chauffeur to a ring of the most intent-looking detectives I ever saw.

One old Arab with beady black eyes gleaming under a blood-red puggaree sat hunched over a thick club, and occasionally made grunting noises as though he were about to spit at somebody. A Hindu with his shirt-tail out advanced theories. A tiny man with bow legs, and a toothless head that reminded me of a camel, made me leap the first time he spoke. From his tiny body there emerged a sepulchral fog-horn voice, deep and rumbling and impressive. I was at last told to write my story down. Then I went out to dinner.

I'd barely finished this when Charlie Chan came in. I realize I've taken a long time getting the Honourable

Mr. Chan into this adventure but he now arrived and dominated the scene.

He walked in, smiled, sat down, unfolded my statement and said it had a discrepancy. There followed a brief lecture on the peril of discrepancies in police work.

"What you lost was a note, a piece of money—is it so?"

"Yes."

"What number was on it?"

"I don't know."

There followed a brief lecture on the folly of not knowing the numbers of bills.

"Could you otherwise identify your bill?"

"It was of the Bank of France . . . purple and white . . . creased and folded into four . . . it was fairly new."

"Inadequate. Descriptions of money are always inadequate. Where money is concerned, no man is honest. You tempt too much. A jewel he might not take, nor a watch or other precious things. But money—it is too much. You say you have lost money and you can't identify that money even if we find it. Now, if you were a citizen of Aden, I would say this is all very much too bad, but you have been foolish and careless and we decline to investigate. But you are a stranger here and we must do our best to take care of strangers, so we will have your money back."

He clapped his hands and a thin black pencil of a man burst into the room. Behind him I saw four brown arms withdrawn. These had obviously pushed the black pencil into the room.

"Is this the thief?" Inspector Billimoria asked.

I certainly could not have said so. Here was a man in a red and white turban with a red and white skirt fastened around his skinny middle by a big money belt. So far as I could see, he was just one more eight ball

about to take several strings of beads from his pockets and try to sell them. The man at the club had worn neither turban nor skirt; but trousers and a fez.

But he solved the question of identity by launching into a fast and rather incoherent monologue to the effect that he had returned the wallet to me exactly as I gave it to him. The inspector and I now looked at the man in silence. He stopped talking and shifted from one foot to the other. He seemed to get green in the face.

"Take him out," the inspector said, and four brown arms reached into the room to jerk their prey out. The inspector turned his bright black eyes on me and now unsheathed a few remarks about psychology. "Now this is the type of man we must treat with kindness because kindness is what he least expects. He expects to be taken from here and flogged or beaten in what you call the third degree. He expects to be beaten so often and so furiously that he will yield up the thousand francs. That treatment will never work in this case—so I go to get your money in a different way. Good evening, sir."

He was gone into the night that was now hideous with the songs and war whoops of 3,000 British sailors on shore leave. I read papers five weeks old which told me Harar, in Ethiopia, would be bombed within a day, snorted, and went to bed.

In the morning, like everyone else in Aden, I was awakened by dawn bugles. Not one or two bugles in a single spot, but dozens of bugles shrilling their commands from every direction. A gun roared out. Aeroplanes coughed into action and went growling through the skies.

The heat soon came on in all its fury. The Italian recited a long poem to the effect that only mad dogs and Englishmen walk in the noonday sun, so we started back for my diggings and there, waiting for me, was Inspector Billimoria with my thousand francs.

"Kindness," he said, beginning where he had left off the night before. "I go to this boy and I say, of course, no one really expects he has stolen the sahib's money. Who on earth could ever get rid of that sort of money in Aden? This, of course, makes the boy worried. He had not thought to have difficulty getting rid of the money.

"But, I say, the sahib is a stranger here and he got his wallet in the dark and he probably opened it to pay for his drinks. The boy eagerly says, 'Yes, yes, that is quite so.' Then I say that undoubtedly at that time the thousand-franc note fell on to the sands and fluttered away along the beach, and if the boy will go and carefully search for it he will undoubtedly find it and there will be no further troubles; just peace and tranquillity. So he goes out and very quickly returns, all tearful of eye, with your thousand francs, sir, and here it is with my great pleasure. And always remember, sir, that much more can be accomplished by kindness than with the third degree." He bowed sharply, clapped on his topee and walked into the glaring sun.

So far as the war was concerned Aden was just a fortress of rumours and nobody knew what it was all about so I took the ferry to Djibouti in French Somaliland and that was worse. The port was like a heat-baked mining town on the boom and every ship brought noisy news hawks and hungry harlots, none of whom could find a place to sleep. Hotels were jammed beyond capacity, prices soared, cable offices worked overtime, photographers paid bazaar loafers to pose as ferocious Ethiopians and rumours were salable commodities in a bull market.

Most of the scribes after an energetic week or so settled into a philosophical rut and ceased to worry so long as the letter of credit and the beer held out.

Since there were already 200 reporters kicking their

heels in idleness at Addis Ababa I decided to pass up that fantastic capital and have a look at the war in so-called yellow hell of the Ogaden to the south, and thought the best way to make the invasion was by way of British Somaliland. To do this I had to go back to Aden and there I fell in with an infuriated Turk who by some act of magic installed me in an elaborate private bungalow. The place had everything from tiled bathrooms to a sitting-room with enough leather furniture for a club, three powerful radios, two portable bars, pool and ping-pong tables and a slot-machine.

He had come out in the beginning in the hope of selling munitions to Haile Selassie. In this he flopped, but through Bombay connections he was soon supplying cotton to Italy. None of this is important except as casual sidelights on a man who had all the stock mannerisms of an Oppenheim international spy. I enjoyed four lazy days with him.

From the lava beds of Aden to Berbera, capital of British Somaliland, you go on a dinky steamer run by a Bombay Parsee who spends most of the 36-hour voyage unfolding gory tales of the Red Sea slave traffic. His house-flag is a black ball on a red field and that, with the ever-watchful eye of the suspicious Lascar deck-hands, gives you the idea you're a potential plank walker under the Jolly Roger with a swashbuckling crew of pirates.

Berbera is the closest spot the looker-on can get toward Italy's advance into the death valleys of Ogaden, and no doubt map readers imagine you can sit there in the shadow of the Union Jack and a friendly palm sipping a cool drink and greeting refugees who flock in from battle areas with first-hand stories of bloody encounter. This, unluckily, is rot.

You can't even go to Berbera without written permission from Commissioner Sir Arthur Lawrence,

and when you get there you find yourself fenced in behind taboos and dependent on official hospitality which is adequate but aloof. I for one felt like a gate-crasher in a cloister dedicated to files and the order of precedence.

The official village looks like something for dolls with miniature streets and tiny, sad gardens, but the visitor notices one difference. The few short avenues are cut by a network of strong walls loop-holed to command a view from every angle of the wells which stand outside the town. Wells on which every life in the place depends. Streets all converge in bottle-necked passages to which steel gates can be quickly hinged and closed to keep out invaders.

Beyond the mountains lie the headquarters of the Camel Corps where everything is spit and polish and there is constant activity. This corps, one of the finest in the British service, is ready for any call, and frequently, when tribes get into fights between themselves, they travel long distances at incredible speed.

One section is mechanized. Instead of camels the men use trucks to get about and patrol roads to the Ethiopian frontier. It was because of these roads and these cars that I went to Berbera. The idea, which seemed a bit hopeless, was to get up by Hargeisa, across the frontier and take my chance on the unbridged rivers toward Jijiga, Harar and other Ogaden towns where fierce fighting was supposed to be going on.

It would sound enterprising if, at this stage in these random memoirs, I reported the outfitting of a caravan for a dash into the valleys of blood. There were caravans in plenty, and these, with competent guides, could have been hired for a trifle. The only snag was an ingrown hatred for camels and red tape. If there is anything of which East Africa has more than red tape, it must be rumours, or pictures of Haile Selassie.

So, making every effort to be casual about it, and

carrying only what I could tuck into pockets, I strolled into the square which resembled a stock-model Hollywood set for any African picture, and made furtive inquiries about a bus which seemed to be loading for an outward trek.

The driver was a Zulu who grinned a cheery, "Sure, boss," to my request for a ride and that seemed to be that. I scribbled a sort of valedictory note to my wife—not because I had anything to say, but because she saves stamps—and climbed in with a clean and cheery bunch of black men and one rather smelly woman who was neither clean nor cheery.

I knew that if white officers came to check us through at the border, my little adventure would be a squib. If black men came, I'd brazen it out. In this ambition I had one trump card. Arrivals in British Somaliland must carry permits. These serve instead of passports, and passports themselves are not stamped with the colonial seal. My own passport is both dilapidated and crowded with visa stamps. Just to get it filled up more quickly, so I could have a new one, I asked the commissioner at Zeila, on an earlier visit, to mark my credentials and he did. This, I figured, might get me across the border into Ethiopia.

We rumbled down through ghats after that, stopped at Burao, where the woman left us, then camped in an oasis for food. I had nothing with me, but the Somalis and a couple of Ethiopians were generous with dried pancakes and a sort of wine which tasted like fermented pineapples.

The Ethiopians told a blood-curdling story about an Italian attack on their village beside the Shebeli River, where, they swore, Italian wounded littered the plains and in the night marauding bands of lions fell on them and tore their bodies to shreds. The Ethiopian is a born actor and in telling any anecdote he fairly goes into

spasms of tooth-grinding and frowns. These fellows, seeing my bug-eyed interest (rather than the sceptical views I really held), warmed to their tale and before long hippos were splashing out of the river to plunder and devour the followers of General Graziano.

From Burao to Hargeisa was an agony of heat and sand. The truck lurched from side to side and sleeping passengers were frequently sprawling all over me. The land was studded with huge ant-hills, some three times the size of the truck, and this caused my Ethiopian pals to think up further horrors. When they got into battle, they said, they'd catch an Italian or two and tie him over such a hill; then they'd stand and gloat while the ants scissored the soldier to shreds.

We spent the night in Hargeisa. There was a vaccination depot in town, long in disuse, so I shared its meagre comforts with some talkative lizards with brilliant skins. In the morning, I opened some tins of what I'd bought as sardines. They proved to be anchovies, so salty they almost drove me frantic from thirst before we found an oasis. A new driver had taken the place of the Zulu and he spoke no English but knew a few words of Hindustani and kept asking all about me. All I could answer was that I was a burra sahib, which is a very important guy in India, and this lack of modesty deepened his suspicions. No colonial official, it seems, ever admitted to being important.

We were nearing the frontier now and I thought it time this driver and I had a heart-to-heart talk. I was prepared to pay him ten rupees if he got me over but couldn't make my meaning clear. I think the man considered me slightly insane, which decision may have been perfectly sound for all I know.

Anyhow, a vast expanse of sand and brush now opened before us, studded about every quarter-mile by a white shaft of concrete. Here, sure enough, was the

frontier. On the one side, the black men ate their raw meat and on the other they didn't . . . but where was the frontier patrol? Where the flags?

Neither flag nor camel nor soldier was visible. We chuffed on, the other passengers nervously handling what few belongings they had with them. Then a couple of men who could have been anything from shepherds to nomadic date pickers, stopped the truck and made certain unintelligible inquiries.

These, it turned out, were levies or irregulars. What we would call deputy sheriffs or vigilantes; citizens of the district sworn in as special police during a time of emergency. I expected no border trouble with them and got none. In a few moments we had passed the white shafts and were in the Ogaden.

Ahead lay war, a weird war of contrasts. Big buzzards followed the bus as it chuffed onward toward Harar.

THE END

General Books

LT.-COMMANDER TOTA ISHIMARU

The Next World War

Author of "Japan Must Fight Britain"

Another world war is coming. When will it be? And where will the volcano erupt? The author of "Japan Must Fight Britain" answers these questions in his new book "The Next World War".

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CAPT. FRANK C. HITCHCOCK, M.C.

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Author of "Saddle-Up", etc.

Preface by MAJOR-GENERAL SIR JOHN CAPPER, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., C.B.

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"Stand To" is not a dull, morbid record of the war, and the most grim account includes some anecdotes of the Kipling-Mulvany calibre from the mouth of one of those grand Irish soldiers who took life in the trenches with a laugh or a jest, and particularly when things were really uncomfortable and "unhealthy" from either the elements or from shell-fire. The writer's powers of description and observation combined make this an invaluable work. Historians in years to come will delve into it as they do into the records of Caesar's Tenth Legion to obtain a really unique insight into the fighting in France from the point of view of a company officer serving with one of the crack regiments which suffered disbandment on the creation of the Irish Free State.

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